



A. M. D. G.

LETTERS
ON
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

(SECOND SERIES)

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

PART I

BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, HOLY EUCHARIST,
AND PENANCE

BY

F. M. DE ZULUETA, S.J.

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BENZIGER BROS.: NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, AND CHICAGO

1907

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T. M. TAAFFE, S.J.,

CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

Imprimi Potest.

✠ GULIELMUS,

EPISCOPUS ARINDELENSIS,

VICARIUS GENERALIS.

WESTMONASTERII,

Die 12 Junii, 1907.

NOTICE.

THE extremely kind welcome accorded by both clergy and laity to the writer's First Series of Letters on the Commandments encourages him to offer a Second Series relating to those Seven Channels of the Precious Blood—the Sacraments. It has, however, been found impossible to deal with all these within one volume of reasonable compass. Hence it is proposed to add later a second part to the present series, dealing with the three remaining Sacraments—Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. The Editor, in this Second Series, has proposed to himself the same line of fuller and more outspoken instruction which he advocated in his preface to the First Series.

F. M. DE ZULUETA, S.J.

MOUNT ST. MARY'S COLLEGE,
NEAR CHESTERFIELD,

*Feast of Blessed Peter Canisius, of the
Society of Jesus, April 27, 1907.*



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LETTERS ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

SECOND SERIES

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

PART I.

No. I.

INTRODUCTION : WHAT IS GRACE ?

HAVING completed my letters on the Commandments, I now enter upon a fresh series on the Sacraments. It is hardly needful to insist at any length upon the extreme importance of this subject for our spiritual life. The Commandments give us the laws framed by God and by His accredited representative on earth, the Catholic Church. Yet since, for duly keeping these laws, we need to resist and overcome our rebellious passions, and this would prove impossible without the aid of divine grace, nothing can be more vital to us than to acquaint ourselves thoroughly with the seven chief means, or instruments, provided by our Lord for conferring His grace upon us.

Before, however, proceeding to discuss the first

of them—Baptism—it may be well to obtain some notion about grace itself—that supernatural gift which the Sacraments contain and convey to our souls.

What, then, is grace?

'Grace' explained.

A thing not easy to explain in such simple words as will make it intelligible to the average lay reader. No scientific treatment, therefore, will be here attempted. I shall endeavour, instead, to popularize the subject by means of comparisons and illustrations.

Necessary and free.

Grace is a gift necessary for our salvation and sanctification, which God freely bestows upon the souls of men for the sake of the merits of Jesus Christ, Who earned it for them by His death upon the cross.

Above nature.

It is a *supernatural* gift—that is to say, Grace neither belongs to our human nature, nor is there in man anything that demands its bestowal. God, in His goodness, confers it freely.

Invisible

It is not anything that we can see, or feel, or touch, any more than the soul receiving it can be perceived by any of the senses. For Grace—though a very *real* thing indeed—belongs to the *spiritual* world of beings. It is a quality, or property, invisible like the soul to which it is imparted. Yet, in the sight of God, there is a whole world of difference between a soul in grace and one that lacks this precious gift—a difference wider than between life and death.

Kinds of grace.

There are two principal *kinds* of Grace. We call them (1) *Sanctifying* Grace, or grace which

places the soul in a state of holiness; (2) *Actual Grace*, which is a divine aid given to the soul in its various necessities. Let us look at each kind separately.

1. *Sanctifying Grace* will be best understood from its effects, the chief of which is to make us the *adopted sons* of God, instead of mere creatures and servants as we are by nature.¹ To illustrate this:

1. Sanctifying Grace.

Illustration.

A rich man rescues some street-arab from a London slum, and *adopts* him—that is, he takes the boy home, makes him like his own son, educates him, and puts him on a sort of equality with the rest of the family. The lad had no right to such a favour. His condition of life had placed it quite beyond his reach to become a gentleman's son, with the prospect of inheriting a portion of a rich man's estate.

Now we, as mere creatures made by God, have no right to be treated by Him as sons, nor to be made adopted brothers of His only-begotten Son, and coheirs with Jesus Christ to the Kingdom of Heaven. No matter how good our lives, we could never, as human beings, deserve to enter Heaven after death. Such a reward as that of associating for ever with the Great God lies far beyond purely human attainment.

Now Sanctifying Grace alters all this. It lifts us above our ordinary human condition to that of *adopted sons* of God, and adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, 'the first-born amongst many brethren.'

¹ It is the possession of *Sanctifying* (or 'habitual') Grace that places us in what is called the 'state' of grace.

Enables
us to
'merit'
for
Heaven.

In virtue of this gift of sonship we are enabled so to please God by our good actions as really to *earn* Heaven for our *just* reward. Without it, we should indeed receive some recompense of a natural sort—provided we served our Maker according to our lights—but never *such* a reward as endless, blissful union with God Himself in Heaven. For that more greatly exceeds our natural claims than reception into a rich man's family would those of the street-arab.

Illustra-
tion.

To take another example. An ostler in service at Buckingham Palace would doubtless look for some promotion for long and faithful service in the King's stables. But he would never dream of being received for good and all into the Royal apartments, or treated as a Prince of the blood. Were he at length promoted to the post of head coachman to the King, he would deem himself fitly and amply recompensed.

Now you see what a wonderful thing is Sanctifying Grace, how sublime the dignity to which it raises us—no less a dignity than that of being admitted, so to speak, into the Divine Family and made 'partakers of the Divine Nature.'¹ It is to this sublime height that Baptism exalts us for the first time. Then, if we are wicked and mad enough to fling away the glorious livery of our adopted sonship by mortal sin, the Sacrament of Penance mercifully restores it to us upon our sincere repentance, and we prodigals are received again to our Father's tender embrace.

¹ 2 Pet. i. 4.

But now to go a little further. Sanctifying Grace can be *increased*. If you are already in possession of it, if you are 'in the state of grace,' as we call it, then each time you receive a Sacrament (or, indeed, perform any other supernatural act) you acquire *additional* grace. How so? For if I be an adopted son of God, what more can be added to me? Well, though God loves *all* His children, yet, just as in a human family, one child may deserve by his conduct to be *better* loved than another. Now, the measure of God's love for us stands in proportion to the *amount* of grace we have acquired.

To put this another way. The gift of grace establishes in the soul a likeness to God's well-beloved Son, through Whose atoning merits we receive it. So the more grace we have the closer our likeness to Jesus Christ, and, consequently, the deeper the love with which God regards us.

Grace, then, may be possessed on earth in varying measure.

So, too, in our Father's house 'there are many mansions'—that is to say, there are many degrees of reward in Heaven corresponding to various degrees of grace. Glory according to grace.

The amount of grace we store up during life resembles a cheque written in the Precious Blood to be cashed at death in heavenly glory. The larger the cheque we are able to present at God's Tribunal, the higher the glory we shall merit in return for it.

2. Actual
Grace
explained.

2. *Actual* Grace differs from Sanctifying Grace. For the latter, as we have seen, places us in a permanent or habitual state of holiness and adopted sonship, albeit one that may be lost by *mortal* sin; while Actual Grace is a passing impulse, an occasional *help* vouchsafed to the soul in its various spiritual needs. For example, one who is in the state of grace experiences a temptation to avenge an injury. But the thought suggests itself that the Sacred Heart of the Crucified freely forgave the cruel executioners, and the temptation is resisted and overcome. Now, that holy thought was an actual grace sent for the purpose of turning the soul from sin.

Again. Perhaps the path of duty, though clear to me, seems hard and costly to nature, and I feel my weakness. I pray for strength, and manage after all to do the right thing. Here are at least two actual graces: the grace to pray, one that God *never* refuses us; and the further grace to do my duty, obtained through prayer.

Result of
good use.

Notice, too, the after-fruit of making *good use* of actual graces, for we possess the dread power of resisting them. Whenever a soul co-operates with these Divine aids, and by means of them acts virtuously, it receives, as a result, an increase of *Sanctifying* Grace. Thus Actual Grace becomes like the seed of fresh habitual grace, and *merit* is increased in the sight of God. To illustrate this, we might roughly compare Sanctifying and Actual Grace respectively to capital and interest. Of His free mercy God bestows upon us spiritual

paupers the capital of Sanctifying Grace, which entitles us to receive periodical instalments of interest in the form of Actual Graces for our current needs. If we use these well, not only are these needs supplied, but fresh treasure is accumulated the while, and is laid by to increase our original capital of Sanctifying Grace.

Actual Grace may be given to a soul that is not in the state of grace, else how could any one repent of his sins? For repentance, being a necessary step towards salvation, requires grace. A hardened sinner, for instance, long absent from his religious duties, chances to hear a powerful sermon on the Passion of our Saviour, which causes him to conceive deep shame and sorrow for having trampled underfoot the Precious Blood, and is sincerely converted. Here actual grace is given to one who had forfeited his state of sonship, and hence had no *right* at all to Divine graces. In his case its bestowal is an act of mercy on the part of God. On the other hand, those who are in grace already have a real *claim* to actual graces in their trials and difficulties simply because they are sons.

The Seven Sacraments, then, are designed by Christ to produce grace in the soul, and they do this *infallibly* and *of their own inward power* alone, provided man of his own free will puts no hindrance to their working. First of all, they either *confer* sanctifying grace for the *first time*, as in the case of Baptism; or *restore* it when lost by grievous sin, like the Sacrament of Penance

Seven means of grace.

(or Confession); or else *increase* grace already existing in the soul, as in the case of the other five Sacraments.¹ Moreover, sanctifying grace thus conferred gives to the receiver a *right* to further actual graces when the need arises.

I am not ignoring prayer—especially acts of perfect contrition—as means of sanctification. But the fact remains that the Sacraments are the chief and most generally effective instruments of grace.

Sacra-
ments are
necessary.

But are they a *necessary* means for all? Some are, some are not; and to such as are there belong different *degrees* of necessity. This point, however, will be more fully discussed when we come to consider the Sacraments one by one: all that need be said here is that whatever necessity attaches to them exists solely because Christ has chosen to create the need. He was not bound to employ Sacraments at all. He might have made faith, or trust in His merits, the *sole* condition for reaping the fruits of His superabundant Atonement, as so many Protestants imagine; or, again, He might have dispensed with all outward Sacramental forms and ceremonies, as the Quaker mistakenly believes to be the case. But in point of fact He has chosen otherwise. Just as the

¹ It is to be observed, however, that the Sacrament of Extreme Unction—as a *secondary* effect, at least—also restores grace: ‘And if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him’ (Jas. v.). For this effect, however, the soul must be at least in a state of *attrition*—*i e.*, sorry for sin from some supernatural motive.

Invisible God willed to communicate Himself to men beneath the sensible form of His Sacred Humanity—received through Mary—so, in turn, this God Incarnate conveys to us His unseen gifts of grace under cover of outward forms and symbols perceptible to our various senses.

Thus do the Catholic Sacraments reproduce in miniature an image of that Incarnation of the Divine Son, from which they proceed and to which they form, as it were, a natural pendant.

Our Lord, by dying on the cross, amply secured the salvation of all men. In a true and Catholic sense *we are saved* by that death. That is to say, our Saviour by His Sacrifice on Calvary put into vigorous motion amply sufficient moral *causes* of our salvation. But something yet remains to be done on our part in order that the saving *effects* may actually be wrought in our individual souls. The price exceeding great is indeed paid over for our rescue from slavery and death, yet each poor captive must lay hold of the ransom in the way *ordained* by Christ.¹

Besides
the Atonement.

To illustrate this. A charitable person, hearing

¹ Thus we see the difference between the Catholic view as to the working of Christ's Atonement in the individual soul and that embodied in such Revivalist phrases as, 'I am saved,' 'Christ has done everything for me'—a view which, under pretext of exalting the Atonement, really debases its virtue. It makes us mere idle parasites on Christ's bounty. Faith is indeed essential, but not all-sufficient. So powerful is Christ's Redemption that it can impart to us poor weaklings the power to work out our salvation (Phil. i. 12) through free co-operation with His Grace.

that some pauper is dying of starvation, deposits £100 in a bank to the poor man's credit. One may truly say this benevolent act rescues the pauper. Yet it will avail him nothing, and he will die, except he go through the appointed forms for drawing out the money. So, too, the Atonement on Calvary, though more than rich enough to redeem ten thousand worlds from the death of sin, nevertheless requires each perishing soul to make the Precious Blood his own by applying to Its appointed sources—the Seven Sacraments. These are like seven precious vessels containing the life-giving waters that leap 'from the fountains of the Saviour.' Thus the Sacraments are necessary for our sanctification and salvation.

No. II.

GENERAL VIEW OF SACRAMENTS.

THE place which the Sacraments hold in the Christian Dispensation is that of instruments of grace, deriving their grace-giving virtue from the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, who, consequently, alone could have instituted them.

When we refer their institution to Christ, we do not mean that the particular rites now actually in use were all of them necessarily determined by Him in detail, or even in their essential parts, but only that He, and He alone, has fixed the specific characters belonging to each of these seven rites, has given them their respective powers, and has commanded their use by His Church. He may have left, and very likely did leave, a large discretion to His Apostles as to their details, without providing that scriptural record should be left of the fact.¹ Opportunities were not wanting for such

Institution by Christ.

In what sense?

¹ See St. John xxi. 25. This is not the place to show that the Bible was not, and of its nature could not be, intended as a complete manual of Christian faith and practice. But we may notice that the obligation of the *Sunday* (as distinct from the Jewish Saturday mentioned in the Decalogue), the practice of Infant Baptism, the present lawfulness to Christians of 'strangled meats and blood' (Acts xv. 20), can none of them be satisfactorily established from the 'Bible only,' apart from ecclesiastical *tradition*.

unrecorded instructions to His Apostles, either during His public life, or during those 'forty days' preceding the Ascension during which He was 'appearing to them and speaking of the Kingdom of God.'¹ Much more He had to say to them, but, as He said, 'you cannot bear them now,' and what yet remained to be told was held back against the day of Pentecost. 'But when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth.'²

The
Sacra-
ments
and the
Bible.

We have the essentials of only two out of the Seven Sacraments plainly set forth in the New Testament — viz., of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. This circumstance led the Reformers to deny the other five, on the false assumption that the Bible contains everything needful for the Christian life. Next to Baptism and the Eucharist the Sacrament of Extreme Unction (anointing of the dangerously sick) is the one most clearly set forth—viz., in the Fifth Chapter of St. James's Canonical Epistle, accepted by the Church of England as well as by the Catholic Church. With reference to Confirmation, the imparting of the Holy Spirit to those already baptized is distinctly stated.³ The power of forgiving sins exercised in the tribunal of Penance is expressly given by Our Lord in the Gospel of St. John.⁴ That of Holy Orders—as conferring a special interior grace of the Spirit—is plainly intimated by St. Paul in his second letter to Timothy,

¹ Acts i. 3.

² St. John xvi. 13.

³ Acts viii. 15-17.

⁴ St. John xx. 21-23.

especially when his words are coupled with his address to him, and to other helpers in the ministry, on the occasion of his sad departure to Jerusalem.¹ As to the Sacrament of Matrimony, we have St. Paul's insistence on its sacred character as 'a great mystery or sacrament' in Christ and the Church,² and our Lord's and St. Paul's teaching upon its indissolubility.³ For the rest of our Sacramental teaching and practice we safely rely upon the teaching of the Catholic Church, to whom, as to His Spouse, Christ our Lord bequeathed these seven means for distributing the riches of His Precious Blood amongst her children. They are her principal aids in securing her appointed end—the salvation and sanctification of souls.

I will now call attention to a few points concerning the Sacraments generally, and add one or two observations about the Minister of the Sacraments.

I. THE NATURE OF A SACRAMENT.

Long since we learnt at our mother's knee the definition of a Catholic Sacrament contained in our Catechism. It states that a Sacrament is an *outward sign of inward grace . . . by which grace is given to our souls*. This implies something more than a devout prayer on the minister's part—such as even a parent might fitly make for his children

What is
a Sacra-
ment?

¹ 2 Tim. i. 6; also 1 Tim. iv. 14; Acts xx. 28.

² Eph. v. 32.

³ See first series of 'Letters,' Appendix III.

while blessing them at night — that God would bestow His grace.¹

An *outward sign* suggests to the mind something that is not actually seen in itself, just as the placing of a card bearing the legend 'C. and P.' in our window notifies our secret desire that the parcels van of that useful company should call at our door. A Sacramental rite consists of an outward ceremony perceptible to our senses, and expressing or 'signifying' the particular character of the spiritual grace conveyed under its cover to the soul of the receiver. Thus, the pouring of water upon the body in Baptism suggests a *cleansing*, and the words, 'In' (really '*into*') the name of the Father, and of the Son,' which accompany the act, suggest a dedication or initiation. All this signifies the invisible cleansing of the soul from sin, and its consecration to the faithful service of God.

2. THE EFFICACY AND WORKING OF SACRAMENTS.

Sacra-
ments
contain
and
produce
grace.

But sacramental signs do more than *express* grace: they effectively *give* it; and this *of their own inherent virtue* as instruments, which are principally in the hands of Christ, and secondarily in the hands of His lawful ministers, who may themselves be viewed as part of the whole instru-

¹ This is all that the Anglican 'Order of Confirmation' appears to undertake. Compare this with the vigour of the Catholic rite.

ment serving the purposes of Christ. One of the definitions of Trent speaks forcibly of Sacraments as *containing* grace.

The sacramental effect of giving grace follows infallibly and inevitably from their correct administration unless the soul itself place in the way some insuperable hinderance to its working. Always supposing a will to receive the grace, the only possible hindrance is the neglect on the person's part of certain indispensable conditions or spiritual *dispositions*.¹ But here we must make no mistake. The spiritual industries required on the part of the recipient for putting his soul into the necessary dispositions are *mere* conditions. In no sense do they contribute to the power belonging to the Sacrament itself; in no way are they *part-causes* of the effect produced any more than the completion of an electric circuit by pressing a button adds anything to the inherent force of the voltage stored up. This inward efficacy—which distinguishes Christian Sacraments from remedial rites in use before our Lord's coming—is technically styled efficacy *ex opere operato*, on which vital term we shall often need to insist.

The truth, however, that personal spiritual effort on our part is needed—at all events, for securing the right conditions—entirely refutes the charge of *formalism* occasionally made against Sacraments, as though these were regarded by us in the light of infallible *charms*, acting auto-

Sacra-
ments
not used
super-
stitiously.

¹ In Infant Baptism such dispositions are neither necessary nor possible.

matically without any intelligent co-operation on our part!

Experi-
ence
proves it.

The Catholic who, after long habits of sin, seeks reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance will be under no delusion as to the amount of spiritual effort required of him. Neither will the convert to Catholicism—long used to private judgment in all things—question the arduous character of faith required of him for Baptism.

But effect
not de-
pendent
on our
devotion.

On the other hand, the intrinsic efficacy with which Christ has endowed His Sacraments prevents their being at all indebted for their virtue to our own industries. The reality of this sacramental independence becomes clearer to us when we reflect that those industries may be things of the past by the time the Sacrament is formed. For it is to be noticed that, with the exception of the Eucharist, a Sacrament has no real existence until the time of its administration. Yet certain dispositions of soul may have been procured long before.

Examples

Thus, for example, A is to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony in six months time; but, conscious of mortal sin, he makes a *perfect* act of contrition, and so places himself in that state of grace which is needed for the reception of matrimony. Not being so inclined, he does not go to the Sacraments before marriage, though he is advised to do so. Nor during the nuptial rite itself does he elicit within himself one single religious act. Nevertheless, no obstacle opposes the working of the Sacrament, and it produces its effect infallibly and

of its own inherent force. Similarly B, who is in mortal sin, makes an act of sorrow and purpose of amendment. Presently he is knocked unconscious and terribly mutilated by a rushing motor-car. He is taken to the hospital, and remains unconscious to the end. But, incapable though he is of any co-operation with the priest who comes to anoint him, there is no obstacle to the working of Extreme Unction, which produces its effect.

It is through not understanding this property of Catholic Sacraments that non-Catholics having charge of sick Catholics often see no necessity for calling in a priest to a hopelessly unconscious patient. They argue that since he is unable mentally to respond to the priest's ministry, the latter can do him no possible good, and may be dispensed with—a mistake that may have irreparable and eternal consequences.

The light which this throws upon the spiritual risks to which *Mixed Marriages* expose the souls of Catholic parties, in the event of mortal sickness, hardly needs pointing out, and sad instances of their actual occurrence are by no means wanting to the experience of missionary priests, where, however, there was no deliberate malice or bigotry on the part of the Protestant half, but only ignorance.

Some theologians describe Sacraments as 'Objective Prayers of Christ'—objective because no longer remaining in His Heart, but put forth and, as it were, crystallized in sacramental rites; prayers, because they act as such. By means of the Sacraments our Mediator infallibly moves the

N.B. *re*
uncon-
scious
patients.

Risk at
death
from
mixed
marriage.

Sacra-
ments
'prayers
of Christ.

will of His Father to pour grace upon the souls of the redeemed according to their need. For the more widely accepted view is that Sacraments are *moral*, and not *physical*, causes of grace to us, inasmuch as they do not produce their effect *directly*, but *mediately*, through the irresistible influence which they exert upon the will of Another Who is the physical cause.¹

3. CLASSIFICATION OF SACRAMENTS.

Classes
of Sacra-
ments.

Sacra-
ments—
1. 'Of the
dead.'

They may be classified in two ways. Thus (1) Baptism and Penance (and, accidentally, Extreme Unction, also) are Sacraments 'of the dead'—*i.e.*, for the spiritually dead. They suppose the soul to be previously in a state of spiritual death through grievous sin, and are chiefly designed to raise the soul again to the life of grace.

2. 'Of the
living.'

The other Sacraments, according to their primary purpose, are called 'of the living'—*i.e.*, for the spiritually living—their object being to *increase*, for definite needs, the degree of spiritual vitality already existing.

Charac-
ter-giving
Sacra-
ments.

(2) Again, the three Sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, are unique in this: that they impress upon the soul an invisible, heavenly mark, or 'character,' consecrating the soul once and for ever, according to the particular scope of the Sacrament used. Hence these three

¹ The difference between a moral and a physical cause will be seen by this example: A persuades B to give a beggar a shilling. A is the *moral* cause of the benefaction; B is the *physical* one.

can never be really received more than once during life, though, *in case of doubt* as to their having originally been *validly* received or administered, the rites may be lawfully repeated in *conditional* form as a precaution. Otherwise such attempted repetition would be sacrilege.

THE MINISTER OF SACRAMENTS.

The Head Minister is, of course, Christ our Lord *par excellence*. It has been said already that these instruments of salvation and holiness are primarily in His hands, and that the priest who administers them on earth may be considered as part of the instrument itself. He is, however, a rational human being, and hence, in lending himself to the service of Christ, he must act as such. This implies that he must mean to confer the Sacrament, otherwise he is not acting as a *rational* instrument or delegate.¹

But since the virtue of the rite he handles does not come from him, unfitness or unworthiness in him as to faith or morals cannot impair that virtue. Obviously the contrary state of things would at once throw universal uncertainty over the whole Sacramental system. For in order to feel at all comfortable about our Sacraments, we should first have to investigate the conscience of the minister. It is true that God has denied us *absolute* certainty in many religious ways in order that we might be led to repose our hope and confidence ultimately and above all in Him. But the

Who gives Sacraments?

Personal merit not essential.

¹ See Appendix I., p. 377.

degree of precariousness which would result from the indispensable need of faith and sanctity in the minister would completely destroy that *practical* certainty which we can and ought to have as to the efficiency of our Lord's providence over the Sacramental system of His Church, and over every single soul of His flock.

A lack
of faith,

We can gather from the above the want of faith exhibited by those who, because their priest shows himself liable to some human frailties, decline to avail themselves of Sacraments. This, kind reader, is not intended as an apology for the holes in my 'cloth.' I am only pointing the commonplace moral that two wrongs do not make a right.

When
'Orders'
not
needed,

There are only two Sacraments that do not *essentially* require at least a truly ordained *priest* for minister—viz., Baptism and Matrimony. Lay Baptism is *always valid* if accurately performed, but is only free from *sin* on the side of the performer in cases of necessity. In Matrimony the true ministers are the contracting parties themselves: but unless a priest preside in the Church's name to bless the union, the latter is either *sinfully* contracted or else absolutely *invalid* before God, according to the non-enforcement or enforcement by the Church of the full Canonical Law in the country.

Legitimate Appointment.

Authority
indispens-
able for
ministry.

Anyone who presumes to minister to the sheep of Christ must have authority from Him. From Him only can jurisdiction of so sacred and sublime a character be derived. This implies that the

minister of Sacraments must not only possess power to give Sacraments (in virtue of true Orders, where Orders are needed), but must be authorized by Christ to *use* those powers in given cases.

It follows necessarily from what was said of Christ as the *principal* agent in Sacraments that the ministering priest, in order to function as His instrument in conferring them, must have been assumed by Him for this function, or he can have no *locus standi*. No deputation by any lower authority than His will entitle the priest so to act. In a word, the Catholic priest needs jurisdiction for his ministry, if not for its validity (as in the case of Confession), at all events for lawfulness.

In effect, the right of a Catholic missionary priest to minister to souls may be traced to Christ Himself by a tangible, unbroken chain in the following way. The Catholic priest has 'faculties' from his Bishop. The Bishop was invested with his See by Papal Bulls. The Pope who sent these Bulls is historically the successor of St. Peter in the Apostolic See, and to Peter our Lord entrusted the care of His sheep and lambs (St. John xxi.). If we may compare the transmission of spiritual authority from heaven earthward to the passing of an electric current, then we might say that in the Catholic account of Apostolical *mission* there is no *non-conductor* at any point in the above chain—such as the conferring even of *spiritualities* by the Crown upon kneeling Anglican Bishops—stopping the current dead at its very start, and preventing its passage

Tracing
authority
to Christ.

from the Invisible Good Shepherd to visible pastors. This non-conductor—the State—was first interpolated by Henry VIII., and firmly fixed there by Elizabeth. Those Protestantizing Tudors violently separated the ‘*Ecclesia Anglicana*’ from its hitherto acknowledged spiritual head in Rome, interposing the secular power between Christ and His Church. No *temporal* authority of States or Sovereigns can pass on that which God never gave to it—*spiritual* authority over the souls of the redeemed—any more than an acorn, though it may produce a mighty oak, possesses power to beget the smallest tadpole.

If any man comes to me and says, ‘I am Christ’s minister: put your soul under my pastoral care,’ he must be prepared not only to *state* that he speaks and acts for Christ, the Good Shepherd, or that he has gone through some form of external appointment as a pastor of souls, but he must, besides, be able to give an intelligent account of the *entire process* by which such right as he claims has issued from Christ Himself and gradually descended to him.

A sacred
right.

It is my right that he should do this; it is a duty to my own soul that I should exact it. He must be able to point to tangible evidence—evidence that can be examined—of his commission from Christ. A mere assertion of mission from Christ will not suffice me, even if it be true; for unless evidence beyond his own sincere convictions can be brought, the alleged *fact* of his having

been duly '*sent*'¹ must remain in the obscurity of his inner consciousness. To me it is as if it were not. Every Catholic knows that his priest can account for his mission in the manner above indicated.

Other points concerning the minister, and those relating to the *subject*, or receiver of Sacraments, will be best dealt with later under the various Sacraments.

¹ 'How shall they preach, unless they be sent?' (Rom. x. 15).

No. III.

BAPTISM—ITS NECESSITY.

'Amen, amen, I say to thee, Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' (St. John iii. 5).

'The
gate'
of the
Church.

BAPTISM is the first and most essential of all the Seven Sacraments. It stands first in order of importance for several reasons. For it is the rite of initiation, or introduction, into the faith of Christ—'the gate,' as the Fathers of the Church call it, of the Catholic Church. By it we are made children of God, are consecrated to the service of the Blessed Trinity, and incorporated with our Head, Jesus Christ, as members of His mystic Body the Church. Its importance in relation to the rest of the seven is this: that unless Baptism has been received, no other Sacrament can take effect in the soul. In other words, if we have not been duly received as *members* of that religious society called the Christian Church, we cannot hope to enjoy the benefits of membership.

'One
Baptism.'

There is but '*one* Baptism'—as St. Paul tells the Ephesians¹—just as there is but '*one* Lord' and '*one* faith.' Every baptized child, therefore, becomes—by the very fact of its valid Baptism

¹ Eph. iv. 5.

—a *Catholic*, no matter what form of religion, or irreligion, its parents or the minister of Baptism may profess; and it remains a true Catholic until it has reached such an age as to be able consciously, and of its own free act, to reject the authority of the Catholic Church into which it was baptized, and so to separate itself from Catholic communion. Even then—in virtue of invincible ignorance of the true Faith—it may still belong to the ‘soul’ of the Church, through retaining sanctifying grace, though not in outward union with the Catholic body.

Thus baptisms *do not differ* according to the ‘Conditional’ Baptism of converts.
 denomination in which they are received. There is not an Anglican, a Wesleyan, a Baptist Baptism, etc., but only ‘*one Baptism*’—that belonging to the true religion of Christ Who instituted it—namely, *Catholic Baptism*. Accordingly, when the Catholic Church receives a convert into her fold she does *not*, as a matter of course, submit the candidate to a second baptismal rite. In each case she inquires—as far as may be possible—into the correctness of any administration of this Sacrament which may have preceded, no matter who or what the minister may have been. Only when examination raises a reasonable doubt as to its validity does she *repeat the ceremony*, and then only does so *conditionally*, saying by the mouth of her priest, ‘*If thou art not baptized, I baptize thee,*’ etc.¹

¹ The accusation that Catholic priests administer Baptism *a second time* to converts from Anglicanism, or from other

'Church
of your
Baptism !'

From the above we can detect the bad logic of a reproach of which a convert is often the object from his, or her, former Anglican co-religionists : 'How *could* you forsake the *Church of your Baptism !*' This begs the whole question at issue. For the only Church which can lay claim to Christian Baptism at all is obviously the *true Church of Christ*, whichever it be ; and it is only because the convert has come to see clearly that this Church is not the Anglican, but rather the one ruled by the Pope, that he *returns* to (and does not 'forsake') the *real* 'Church of his Baptism'—the Catholic Church of Christ.

Baptism
essential
for
Heaven.

The chief importance of Baptism lies in its *necessity* for 'entering the Kingdom of God'—that is to say, *Baptism is necessary for salvation*. We will now examine in what sense this statement should be understood. What interpretation are we to put upon those words, spoken by Our Lord in the stillness of the night to Nicodemus, which head this Letter? Let me sum up the teaching of the Church, the authorized exponent of the Scriptures.

baptizing denominations, reveals a want of intelligence ; for the Catholic Church expressly teaches that Baptism is one of the three Sacraments which can be effectually received but *once*, and that any attempt to confer it a second time involves a hideous sacrilege. Rome is known to have strictly forbidden even a *conditional* repetition of the ceremony when unimpeachable evidence was forthcoming as to the absence of any defect in the previous administration by a non-Catholic minister or lay person.

1. *Baptism of Infants.*—Infants dying unbap- Infants.
 tized *can never enjoy the sight of God in Heaven.* This does not imply that they are condemned to Hell; for infants, being incapable of actual sin—*i.e.*, personal sin of their own—could not deserve such punishment. At the same time, seeing that they have not actually received baptism, their souls have never been cleansed from Original Sin, have never had applied to them the merits of Christ's Atonement on the Cross, by which application alone they could have regained the right to Heaven, which was forfeited by our First Parents for themselves and their posterity. God, therefore, does no injustice in refusing Heaven to unbaptized children; for injustice means the violation of a *right*, and, as we considered in the previous Letter—on 'Grace'—no human being can have a natural right to associate with God in eternal happiness. In temporal affairs, no one can claim a property without he own the title-deeds; so no child of Adam can claim the heavenly inheritance except he possess the title-deeds, written in the Precious Blood of the Redeemer, to be acquired only by means of Baptism. How wickedly reckless, then, are those Catholic parents who delay for weeks, perhaps for years, to have their children baptized! By such guilty neglect they run the awful risk of their helpless little ones being overtaken by an accident, or some mortal sickness of infancy, ere they have been made the children of God by Baptism, and so expose them to the eternal loss of Heaven.

How many poor babes, alas, are thus defrauded of the glorious inheritance bought back at so heavy and so divine a price! Worthy of all praise for their truly Catholic faith are those good Christian mothers who hardly suffer a day or two to pass without securing so priceless a benefit for their offspring. They will not allow excessive fears—*e.g.*, lest, perchance, a healthy baby should take cold in the process—to weigh for one moment against their anxiety to provide for its eternal welfare.

'I don't
see the
need.'

These pages are, of course, primarily intended for Catholics. But since they may also meet the eyes of others, I think it well to meet here an objection which non-Catholic fathers or mothers sometimes make to having their children baptized. They will say, '*I don't see the use of Baptism. I don't believe it matters. God could never make Heaven depend upon such a detail! My view is that no religious engagements should be made for a child before it knows what it is about,*' etc. With such an objector I should be inclined to reason thus: '*My good friend, perhaps you may see no good in Baptism, you may not believe that God requires it; but your thinking it useless or inadvisable will not make it so, if, contrary to your ideas, it be really essential for gaining Heaven, and that, too, by the will and express declaration of Christ Himself. For, after all, it is His right to define the terms upon which His saving merits shall be imparted to your child's soul unto salvation.*

Sincerity
unavail-
ing.

You may be, and no doubt are, quite *sincere* in your opinion; but sincerity can never supply the

lack of an *indispensable condition*, if such exist. When a certain definite result has to be secured by the use of certain *appointed precautions*, and these are neglected, the result will certainly be lost, however perfect the good faith which led to the neglect. There are many ills that are not to be remedied by mere sincerity. Thus, for instance, 'a country cousin,' sight-seeing in London after the 'season,' may *sincerely* believe that he can inspect the Royal Mint by simply walking in, yet he will be refused admission by the porter with equal sincerity unless he comes armed with an 'order.' A workman, while lighting his pipe in the dinner-hour, may throw the lighted match on to a black-looking mass beside him, *honestly* judging it to be only a heap of powdered charcoal; yet, should it chance to be dry gunpowder instead, he will be quite as *honestly* blown up—for a' that.

'Remember, too, the huge mass of fixed con-
 viction among Christians that stands arrayed
 against your view—that time-honoured, settled
 belief of countless millions in past ages, of over
 two hundred millions of 'Roman' Catholics at the
 present day, not to mention millions of non-
 Catholics besides. These are not *all* fools, *all*
 ignorant, *all* too credulous. Some, indeed, have
 been among the greatest thinkers of their age;
 and yet all bear witness to the necessity of infant
 Baptism. What if this huge mass of firm belief
 happen to be correct, and your opinion wrong—a
 supposition which reflects no deep dishonour upon

The
 consent
 of ages.

a proverbially fallible mortal? Are you prepared to run the *chance*, at least, of doing supreme and irreparable injury to your own flesh and blood for the sake of acting upon your opinion? I fancy that if, instead, there were a chance of your child's missing a handsome worldly fortune, you would act differently, and neglect no possible precaution which—according to a very widespread conviction—might secure it. Why not be equally prudent when an *eternal* inheritance is in question?

Un-
reasoning
prejudice.

‘To put it at the lowest: Baptism can do no possible harm either to you or to your child, while you ought in reason to admit, in view of the conviction of so many reasonable and worthy beings like yourself, that it *may* make an everlasting difference to your offspring.’

Un-
baptized
infants.

Concerning the future state of unbaptized infants, God has vouchsafed us no definite revelation. One favourite opinion of theologians is that they will live in some sort of earthly paradise, happy according to their capacity, and certainly not saddened by the loss of a higher state of bliss which is entirely unknown to them. Even supposing that their intelligence were permitted to develop, they could never conceive the possibility of going to God in Heaven. We ourselves only receive this knowledge by divine revelation. So these little ones would be in a somewhat similar position to the average street-urchin, who does not make himself miserable because he is not the King of Great Britain and Ireland, and Emperor of India.

No. IV.

BAPTISM OF ADULTS.

WE have seen that the actual reception of Baptism is, in the case of infants, an indispensable condition for salvation. By infants we mean children not yet arrived at the use of reason. Adult Baptism.

The further point arises, How far is this Sacrament essential for the salvation of adults? It is clear that infants—as being unable to turn to God by any intelligent acts of their own—have no other means but Baptism of appropriating to themselves the merits of the Precious Blood, for the remission of Original Sin, and for recovering their lost inheritance to the Kingdom of Heaven. A difference.

With adults it is otherwise; for in their case—though Baptism be generally necessary for salvation—a *desire* for the Sacrament, coupled with certain dispositions, will sometimes serve instead of the Sacramental rite itself. Adults can supply for its absence by spiritual acts of their own (performed, of course, with the help of grace) when Baptism chances to be impossible. This impossibility may arise either from want of some one to administer it, from lack of opportunity, or from ignorance as to the *necessity* of Baptism.

There are two ways in which adults may be

cleansed from sin without being actually baptized with water.

Baptism
in desire.

1. Baptism in *Desire*, or the *wish to be baptized* when circumstances prevent the actual reception of the Sacrament. It has the same effect upon the soul as actual Baptism, as far as concerns the removal of Original Sin and the production of Sanctifying Grace. But it does not impart that spiritual 'character' of which more will be said presently; neither does it make the soul capable of assimilating the grace of other Sacraments. Besides, it only cleanses and sanctifies *provided* the desire for Baptism be accompanied by *perfect love of God*—that is, *simply for His own sake and above all things*. Supposing, however, the person to have no knowledge of Baptism, or of its necessity, this pure love of God—containing, as it must, the desire to do *all* that pleases Him—*virtually includes* a desire for Baptism. But pure love of God is a very perfect disposition of heart, and hence not so readily developed. Consequently, although a man *can* be saved in this manner, yet it is a far harder way than actual Baptism—the latter not demanding such lofty dispositions for producing its effect of pardon and grace.

Baptism
pre-
vented.

In a case of emergency, we may confidently trust that God would give the special aid required for conceiving an act of perfect charity—*e.g.*, a non-Catholic who has been fully instructed for admission into the Catholic Church, but is killed by a motor-car while actually on his way to the priest for the ceremony of reception.

A more difficult case than the above can be easily conceived—one, perhaps, not of rare occurrence amongst our fellow-countrymen.

Mary—a non-Catholic, who has never been baptized—is at the point of death. Without professing any definite religion, she believes in God and Heaven, and has some knowledge of Christ as the Redeemer. Her resignation to God's Will is perfect, and she is sincerely willing to do *whatever* He may require of her in the circumstances. A Catholic friend acquainted with her history happens to visit her at the last, and realizing Mary's critical state, gently suggests the importance of Baptism. But the dying woman, misled by reading anti-Christian tracts, rejects the notion as 'some Romish superstition'; then, crying out 'Christ help me!' she falls back upon her pillow, dead.

Now, here there may well be a Baptism of *desire*, for Mary's dispositions—as supposed—*amount* to perfect love of God. Yet it will be objected, How on earth can the woman be said to have *desired* Baptism when she expressly spurned it? This is quite possible. For a person may, through ignorance, *expressly* reject a thing which, notwithstanding, he *implicitly* desires. To desire a thing *implicitly* means desiring that which includes it, though, possibly, without knowledge of its being included. Mary sincerely and explicitly desires to do *whatever* God wishes—a desire which really involves the reception of Baptism—though she does not know this, and therefore, in her ignorance,

refuses Baptism. She has, in fact, two conflicting wishes, but to do God's Will is the *prevailing* one.

Prevailing
intention
illus-
trated.

An illustration may help to clear up this somewhat difficult point. Helen—an orphan—is asked whether she would like to keep a certain box containing all her dead mother's jewels. Oh yes! she would dearly love to have *anything* that belonged to her mother. On some other occasion a friend asks her whether she considers ear-rings a nice present to receive. She petulantly replies: 'I wouldn't have such nasty, old-fashioned things near me for anything!' Now, it happens that—unknown to Helen—the maternal jewel-box contains, amongst other ornaments, several pairs of ear-rings. On the contents of the box being shown her, she *begs to have the ear-rings too*, because they belonged to her dear mother. Here the orphan's attitude of mind towards the ear-rings—previous to the jewel-case being shown to her—resembles that of Mary towards Baptism, in her ignorance of its being contained in the Divine Will. Helen's scornful rejection of ear-rings did not represent her *uppermost* thought. Prevailing over it was her general desire to have *whatever belonged to her mother*. This wish so predominated over every other that, on her mother's ear-rings being disclosed to her, she eagerly wished to possess them. Similarly, Mary's *prevailing* desire was to do *whatever* God willed. She only rejected Baptism because of her ignorance, not knowing that this was one of the spiritual

treasures which our Lord had left behind Him in His Church for the necessary adornment of the souls of His children.

Further illustration of the saving force of *prevailing* desires may be found in the case of a Catholic who most firmly believes 'whatever the Church teaches,' but—through ignorance—denies the necessity of confessing all mortal sins to a priest; or who, while innocent of the slightest wish to disobey the Church, arranges for his 'cremation' after death, in ignorance of positive legislation condemning this manner of funeral. The first has not denied his faith, nor has the second been formally disobedient. This exemplifies the comforting truth that our merciful Lord judges us *by what we really mean* in our heart of hearts, and not by our stupid but unintentional mistakes.

2. Baptism of *Blood*, or Martyrdom.

Though called by a different name, this second alternative to Sacramental Baptism is, in truth, only another form of Baptism by *desire*, of which it is the highest expression. For martyrdom involves faith of the most vigorous and fearless type, and most perfect love of God—that love 'greater than which no man hath than that he lay down his life for his friend.'¹ By martyrdom not only is all sin, original and actual, wiped away, but all temporal punishment in Purgatory also.

With many of the early martyrs, Baptism in their own blood was the only kind available.

¹ St. John xv. 13.

The
Martyr's
Baptism.

Large numbers of worshipping Christians were often slaughtered wholesale and without warning, and amongst these there must have been many catechumens who had not yet been led to the baptismal font.

The Holy
Innocents.

A difficulty arises concerning *Infant* martyrs, of whom the Holy Innocents, slain so ruthlessly by Herod, were the first. As irrational infants, they could not profess their faith, neither could they be conscious of the holy cause for which they were made to suffer. Being Jewish children, those which were *males*, and at the time of massacre had reached the eighth day after birth, will, as 'children of Abraham,' have received *circumcision*, which rite, although it had not the *intrinsic* virtue of conferring grace like Baptism, was nevertheless the *occasion* upon which God remitted Original Sin, regard being had also to the faith in the coming Redeemer possessed by the parents. As for *female* infants, theology takes for granted, in the absence of a definite revelation on the point, that some Divinely-appointed remedy or remedial rite was in operation for removing Original Sin, both in the case of Jews, even before the establishment by God of circumcision, and in the case of Gentiles generally.

But apart from all this, we have it from the constant tradition of the Church, and from her immemorial *cult* of the Holy Innocents, that by some special dispensation of God the death inflicted on these little innocents, cut of hatred for

Christ, placed them at once in possession of eternal happiness.

We are by Baptism the children of Mary, the Christian's mother by adoption. If St. Paul could say: 'For in Christ Jesus, by the Gospel, I have begotten you,'¹ Mary can say with truth to each of us: 'In Christ Jesus, by my share in His Sacred Passion, have I brought you forth.' For it was on Calvary that Jesus, our essential Mediator and Redeemer, gave her as a mother to us all, represented there by the disciple of His love. There, at the foot of the Cross, did Mary enter upon her maternal office towards us with sore travail of anguish and bitter tears. A mother of this world extends her fostering care for her little ones far beyond the time of their birth and childhood. With untiring and tenderest anxiety she follows every step of her children's lives, encouraging them in their struggles, rejoicing in their successes, soothing and sympathizing with them in their disappointments. So too, Mary, ever faithful to the charge which Jesus laid upon her with His dying breath, watches with even greater solicitude and tenderness over our progress in the way of Christ.

To her, then, should we go in all our daily needs, trusting to her resistless intercession for strength to follow in the steps of her Divine Son, and at the same time learning how to copy Him from her most perfect example. Does she not seem to call to us in the words of the Apostle,

¹ 1 Cor. v. 15.

'I beseech you, be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ'?

It behoves us to weigh well *the responsibilities of our Baptism*, which by God's pure mercy has sealed us as brothers of Jesus Christ, and, in virtue of the same grace of adoption, children of Mary also.

No. V.

THE EFFECTS OF BAPTISM: ITS MINISTER AND METHOD.

WHAT is the nature of the *grace* or *supernatural effect* produced invisibly in the soul by the Sacrament of Baptism? What
Baptism
does.

In general it is a *new birth*—a spiritual regeneration by which the soul is made alive to God and capable of union with Him in Heaven.

In greater detail. 1. Baptism imprints a spiritual seal, or *character*, upon the soul of the baptized, and this supernatural badge marks him off a member of the visible Church of God on earth, and renders him *capable* of receiving the other six Sacraments. Moreover, this 'character' being for ever indelible, Baptism can be received but *once*.¹ 1. 'Char-
acter.'

In a former letter I pointed out that there was only *one* Baptism, and that the Catholic, so that any Baptism properly conferred, and no matter by whom conferred, makes the baptized a Catholic. Then, in giving membership with the visible Catholic Church, it also conveys the privileges of membership—viz., power to receive the graces of the other Sacraments. Only the actual recep-

¹ See footnote, p. 24.

tion of Baptism has this advantage—Baptism of *desire* has it not. Thus, for example, a Roman soldier under Nero who yielded himself up to the executioners for martyrdom, but was reprieved, we will suppose, at the last moment, would have needed to be baptized afterwards in spite of having been cleansed from all sin by the perfect dispositions of faith and love in which he awaited martyrdom.

A soul that has not received the Sacrament of Baptism is incapable of receiving any of the other Sacraments. It is in view of this truth that at the reception of a convert into the Catholic Church (*i.e.*, whenever Baptism is given ‘conditionally’ on account of doubt attaching to its previous valid reception) the conditional absolution from sin is ordered to be given *after* the baptismal rite. Hence, too, the care taken by ecclesiastical authorities to secure baptismal certificates, or reliable proof of Baptism, from candidates for the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Orders.

2. Adam's
sin
cleansed.

2. Baptism *cleanses the soul from the stain of Original Sin* (and of actual or personal sins as well), and clothes it in ‘the garment of justice’—that is to say, with Sanctifying Grace, the grace of ‘adoption of sons’ in relation to God. So far, then, as the recovery of grace is concerned, this Sacrament undoes the baleful effects of Adam's fall. But it still leaves with us a vestige of Original Sin in that *rebellion of concupiscence* from which our First Parents were created free. We are made only too well aware of this surviving

defect from the difficulty we experience in subduing our passions and evil impulses.

3. Baptism, besides wiping off the *guilt* of sins, also *effaces any existing debt of temporal punishment* due for them, provided the recipient retain no *latent affection* for sin.¹ Some such hankering after one form of sin or another may easily remain, in spite of substantial conversion.

3. Remits
punish-
ment.

This *complete* remission of sin and its penal consequences is peculiar to the Sacrament of Baptism, the latter being a *pure mercy* of God, and not, as the Sacrament of Penance is, an effect of Divine *mercy and justice* combined. Hence the greater fulness of the pardon. God, who is rich in mercy, starts the soul in its supernatural life without a drawback, and with an absolutely 'clean bill of health,' regardless of what sinfulness there may have been in the past.

But if that soul, unmindful of such royal bounty, should wilfully cover itself anew with the deadly leprosy of sin, God's unspeakable mercy in once more healing the disease through Penance becomes tinged with *justice* for the wrong done, and reasonably makes *complete* recovery less easy. The penance given by the confessor reminds us of this.²

¹ An 'affection' for sin does not mean a *definite wish* to commit mortal sin. This would be mortal sin itself—by desire. It is something less than this—*i.e.*, a certain vague and secret *weakness* for some form of bad habit, our detestation for which lacks absolute completeness.

² Of course, contrition for sin *from pure love of God* wipes out all punishment as well as guilt. But Baptism does both without such *perfect* contrition.

4. Claim
to help in
our needs.

4. In our introductory considerations we saw that Sanctifying Grace gave us a *claim to actual graces* or temporary Divine aids in our various spiritual needs. So is it also with Sanctifying Grace that is imparted through the Sacraments. But the actual helps to which *sacramental* grace entitles us differ *in kind* according to the nature and purpose of the particular Sacrament in question.

In the Sacrament of Baptism, therefore, which is designed to infuse the new life into us for the first time, we are given a right to receive such actual graces as are needful for *maintaining* that new and supernatural life—that is to say, *for leading a truly Christian life*.

THE MINISTER OF BAPTISM.

Who may
baptize?

The next question to be considered is: *Who is to administer Baptism?*

As a rule a priest, though deacons are occasionally employed in this office when need occurs.

Notice the difference between a *lawful* administration of Baptism and a *valid* one. A Baptism is *lawfully* given when performed by the *proper person*. A *valid* Baptism means one *performed in the proper way*, and hence—supposing, of course, no hindrance on the side of the recipient—producing the full sacramental effect. Ordinarily, and except where there is fear of death ensuing before Baptism, the priest (or deacon) is the only one who can baptize *lawfully*, and it is sinful for a lay person to take his place. But *any lay person*

whatever, child or adult (who has the use of reason), can baptize *validly*, and, given sufficiently urgent necessity, would also baptize *lawfully*. Thus, if a little girl of nine or ten, who has learnt at her convent school how Baptism is given, goes privately to the cot of her newly-born baby brother and administers the rite to him correctly, her Baptism is as good and true as a priest's; and should she be able to convince the priest afterwards that she did it all rightly, he would decline to repeat the rite, even conditionally. But the child would be *doing wrong*, supposing no urgency to exist; her Baptism would be *inlawful*. The words 'any lay person whatever' are to be taken literally. The lay minister need not be a Catholic, nor a Christian even. It is not necessary even that he or she should *believe* in the rite. The only thing needed is that the Baptism should be seriously meant, and not done by way of a profane joke or mockery. In other words, the person baptizing must at least intend to go through the rite *which Christians call Baptism*, though not attaching any spiritual value to it. Thus an Indian *ayah* might baptize a dying baby knowing that her Christian mistress, its dying mother, would wish it.

THE WAY TO BAPTIZE.

It is of the very highest importance that every Catholic should have clear notions of what is necessary for giving a true Baptism. One never knows when an opportunity may occur of succour-

Important
to laity.

ing some soul in need of baptismal regeneration. This applies most especially to nurses, whether domestic ones, or professional sick-nurses and midwives. They may often have the salvation of dying infants, or others, in their hands, and exact knowledge of the essentials for Baptism will enable them to do a truly apostolic work.

Practical
lessons.

Indeed, it always seems to me that religious instruction given to children—at least, to older ones—should be considered notably deficient which does not include *practical* instruction in *the way to baptize*.¹

As every priest knows, there is a wide difference between a theoretic or book-knowledge of ceremonies and accuracy in carrying them out; and in the present case far graver issues are involved than due obedience to an ordinary rubric.

The Baptismal Rite.—Here we must distinguish between that part of the rite which is *essential* for producing the effect of the Sacrament and the additional ceremonies to be performed by the priest *only*—e.g., the use of blessed salt, of Holy Oil and Chrism, the blessings, etc.

The *one thing necessary* is contained in the following direction:

*Pour water on the child's bare forehead at some time during your recital of the following words: 'I baptize thee, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'*² Of course, Baptism

¹ A large wooden doll, *with real hair*, is almost necessary for an effective instruction of that kind.

² On the bare forehead—i.e., *not* on the hair, if any.

by *immersion*—*i.e.*, by dipping or bathing the candidate *wholly* in water—is quite a *valid* process—that is to say, as far as the way of applying the water is concerned—but, in the Latin portion of the Church, Baptism by *infusion*, or pouring, is the way prescribed, and must be adhered to, except in an urgent case of necessity.

To prevent mistakes, let us go more into details, dividing the matter up into three points: (1) The Water and its Use; (2) the Words and their Use; (3) the *combination* of Water and Words together.

The Water.—The liquid used must be what the common sense of men accounts *natural water*—*e.g.*, spring-water, rain-water, melted ice or snow, sea-water, or even water mixed with a *slight* quantity of some foreign substance—*e.g.*, muddy water in a puddle or ditch by the roadside, water that has been used to rinse out a teapot and the like. (Of course, *reverence* for the Sacrament requires that we should use *clean* water rather than dirty, when obtainable without dangerous delay.) Holy water, though *preferable* if at hand, is *not in the least necessary*.

For perfect safety, the *right application* of the water is as follows: it is to be *poured*, or (if the child be put by the baptizer under falling water) allowed to pour, upon the *skin of the forehead*, and not on the *hair*. Should it be impossible at the time—*e.g.*, from conditions of birth—to baptize on the head, some other notable portion of the body must be chosen—*e.g.*, the breast or shoulders;

and if this be done, the Baptism should, if possible, be repeated *conditionally* on the forehead, since the value of the other method of administration is not *absolutely* sure.

The water used should be poured *freely*—i.e., not merely *sprinkled*, nor should it be applied by merely making a sign of the Cross with one's finger-tip moistened with water. There is a reason for this. Sacramental rites are 'outward signs' of the 'inward graces' which they confer. Now, the inward grace conferred by Baptism is a *washing* (from sin), and this cleansing process is not sufficiently figured unless the water move or flow upon the flesh of the baptized. It is clear that neither the said sprinkling, nor signings with water, as above described, secures a *flow* of water.

Eye-witnesses have testified to having seen clergymen of the Church of England occasionally sprinkle *several infants at once*, thus rendering their Baptism extremely doubtful. But if there be no definite and firm belief in the *necessity* of Baptism, or, at all events, no exact and systematic theological training for ministerial functions, all manner of defects in baptizing are likely to creep in. Hence the care with which the Catholic Church inquires into the previous Baptism of would-be converts, and the *sure* evidence of valid administration which she requires before dispensing with 'conditional' repetition of the ceremony; and such proof it is very commonly impossible to get.

The Words.—The words as given above should be *most literally* adhered to. For although *some* possible modifications of them would not impair the worth of the Sacrament, safety demands that not the *slightest* change should be made.

It will be noticed that, in the formula of words, I have left out the *name* to be given to the baptized. Its insertion is not *essential*, but if given, it should be placed immediately before the three words: 'I baptize thee.' Thus: '(John), I baptize thee in the name of the Father,' etc. No 'Amen' need be added at the end.

As to the *use of the words* prescribed, these should be *distinctly pronounced*, not merely *thought*, though it is not necessary for *validity* that they should be clearly *audible* to bystanders.

Combination of Water and Words.—The pouring of the water and the utterance of the words must go together and not *follow* one another. But, as already stated, the water need not flow *all the time* that the words are being pronounced. It is enough that it be poured *at some point* of their pronouncement.

CONDITIONS FOR LAY BAPTISM.

Lest what has been said should lead to abuses, I must lay down the conditions which justify a member of the laity giving Baptism. When laity may baptize.

1. There must be *real necessity*—that is, some reasonable fear that the candidate for Baptism may die before a priest can be obtained.

2. Outside the case of necessity, it is *altogether*

wrong to baptize children or others secretly merely because we have reason to think they will otherwise go unbaptized through life.

For even a priest may not give Baptism (except on the ground of necessity) to children of non-Catholics, unless he have solid reason for expecting that the child will be brought up in the 'one faith' attached to the 'one Baptism'—*i.e.*, the Catholic. Such reason may be found in the fact that one, at least, of the parents is a Catholic, or—if neither is—that they have decided to have their child brought up as a Catholic, or else that the child is really under the control of some third person who is a Catholic. I give these cautions lest some devout person possessed of a zeal not according to wisdom should at once start off to the street alleys and slums and insist upon baptizing indiscriminately all and sundry children to be found.

Sex and
age im-
material.

Let me add that, where Lay Baptism becomes necessary, the person most likely to do it *properly* is the one to be chosen for the office, whether male or female, and whether a member of the family or not. It is quite conceivable that a well-instructed school-girl may be better qualified than a grown-up man.

Etiquette
dispensed
with.

For the *one great object to be secured* is the sending of a soul to Heaven, and not the punctilious observance of family etiquette, or order of precedence, nor yet the gratification of one's pious feelings or sense of importance in performing so sacred a function.

In connexion with lay Baptism, we may notice the goodness of our Blessed Lord in making this all-important Sacrament so easy to obtain. Given the necessity of Baptism, Christ has extended the power of conferring it to every reasonable being, so that, as far as possible, no one may be deprived of spiritual regeneration for want of a human agent to impart it. I say 'as far as possible,' for doubtless many infants die unbaptized through no fault of their own, either on account of purely natural causes, or through the ignorance of parents, or the criminal carelessness of mothers for the bodily or spiritual safety of their frail infants.

Facility of
Baptism.

Absolutely speaking, God *could*, of course, arrange so that such irreparable disasters should never occur; and—in the case of infants—if loss of Baptism entailed the punishments of Hell or even an unhappy future state, we may take it for granted that He *would*. But in order to do this He would have to be for ever working miracles, so as to prevent the operation of those natural laws which His infinite wisdom has assigned to creation. Where the loss of Baptism would arise from culpable neglect of those responsible (and even ignorance may be culpable), nothing but His violating the free will of man could prevent the evil consequence, as in the case of any other sin that injures the souls of others. All the same, it would be foolish to deny that here we are confronted with something of a mystery beyond the power of our little minds to fathom. Here, too,

Who
shall be
His coun-
sellor?

as in some other problems perplexing those who yet await the rending of the veil, we must be mindful of those pregnant words: 'O the depths of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?'¹ We do not—we cannot—fully know the mind of God, for how shall the finite measure the Infinite? Yet there are those amongst us quite prepared to criticize its judgments without knowledge. We are not the counsellors of that Heavenly King. If we were, what a signal mess we should make of this world, topsy-turvy though it seem to us at times!

Practical
lesson.

The only reasonable course, then, is to bow our ignorant heads in adoration and deep humility, and, resting fearlessly upon the principles of faith, assure our puzzled minds that, little as they may be able to unravel the secrets of God's permissive providence, all is certain to be right nevertheless. Is not such blind faith as this our mainstay when troubled by misgivings as to the fidelity of those we deeply love and have always fully trusted? And whom should we love and trust like our ever-faithful God?

¹ Rom. xi. 33, 34.

No. VI.

BAPTISM : CANDIDATES AND SPONSORS.

SOMETHING remains to be said about the *candidate* for Baptism, and about *sponsors*, or godparents. In this connexion I shall only deal with those points which chiefly affect the duties of the laity.

1. Who is *capable* of Baptism ?

Any living human being. Wherever there is human life—and at whatever stage of it—Baptism can and ought to be given. In the case of births that are precarious or premature—and no matter how premature—the *safer course is always to be followed*—that is to say, Baptism is to be given unless life be *quite certainly* extinct. The Sacraments having been made for man, and not man for the Sacraments, it should be deemed the less of two evils that, through a blameless error of judgment, Baptism should here and there be given in vain, than that any single human soul capable of so incalculable a benefit should depart this life without it. Of course, if doubt exist as to the capability of the subject, whether from absence of life, or, in the case of adults, from lack of dispositions, Baptism should be given *conditionally*—that is to say, the words should be couched in a con-

The Can-
didate's
con-
ditions.

ditional form: 'If thou *livest*, I baptize thee,' etc., or, 'If thou art *disposed*, I baptize thee,' etc. This secures reverence towards the Sacrament, while it does not hinder its effect if communicable.

2. What *conditions*, beyond life, are needed on the part of the candidate for Baptism?

I have already explained in a previous Letter the difference between a Baptism that is simply *valid* and one that is, besides, *lawful*.¹ Thus we have to consider the conditions for each:

For
validity.

A. Conditions for a Valid Baptism.—(a) For valid Baptism of *Infants*. Nothing more is needed than a correct performance of the rite.

(b) For valid Baptism of *Adults* (*i.e.*, those who have, or have had for some time, the use of reason). Besides correct administration, the candidate must have *consented* or wished to be baptized. This wish may be either *expressly stated*, or else *implied* by the person's reasonably conjectured frame of mind as regards religion. But unless the wish be *quite evident*, the Baptism should be given *conditionally*, as explained above. Notice that *consciousness* at the time of Baptism is not needed in a sick person, either for validity or for lawfulness. For previous dispositions of mind are not cancelled by subsequent unconsciousness.²

¹ Obviously, the *opposite* distinction is impossible—*i.e.*, a Baptism cannot be *lawful* and yet *invalid*. For it is never lawful knowingly to baptize under circumstances that render the Sacrament *invalid*—*i.e.*, null and void of effect.

² See N.B., p. 16.

B. Conditions for Lawful Baptism. — (a) Of ^{For law-fulness.} *Infants.* All infants may and ought to be baptized when dangerously ill. But while in health it is unlawful to baptize them unless there be good ground for expecting that they will be so brought up in the Faith of their Baptism as to run no very great danger of perversion on their reaching the years of discretion. Ordinarily, the fact that one of the parents is a Catholic will supply a sufficient guarantee to act upon. But it happens not infrequently that parents, neither of whom is a Catholic, desire that their child should be educated as one. If this desire appears to be sincere, efficacious, and final, Baptism may (and should) be given.

(b) Of *Adults.* In the theological sense, it is possession of the use of reason that makes the *adult*. Anyone, therefore, possessing the same and asking for Baptism may lawfully be baptized if sufficiently instructed. The *amount* of instruction needed will vary according to the capabilities of the candidate.

As a matter of fact, the applicant has a strict ^{The minor asking for Baptism.} right to Baptism, for Christ enjoins it. Besides, in all that concerns its eternal salvation, even a child is its own master—is, so to say, always ‘of age’ spiritually, and not even a parent; still less the State, has any right to thwart it.

Thus a boy (or girl) of nine or ten years of age is quite competent to apply for Baptism. But if his constancy will, in all probability, be severely tried after receiving it, he may lawfully be *put off*,

as a test of his powers of perseverance. In this matter it should be remembered that, by English law, the father has authority to control the religion of his children up to the age of sixteen, and even, till they come of age, to settle where and in what surroundings they shall live; and any one who removed them against the father's will, with a view to securing their perseverance in the Faith, would be amenable to the law for the offence of *abduction*. Hence priests will often defer receiving into the Church the children of parents violently averse to the Catholic religion, while as yet *minors*. They naturally see great reason to fear lest the youthful convert should shortly fall away again through the hostility, entreaties, threats, and, alas! sometimes the petty, persecuting tyranny of parents or relatives. Moreover, the wider interests of Christ's True Faith in a Protestant land might be jeopardized by indiscretion in this matter.

Objection
to delay.

It may be objected that such refusal is a violation of the child's claim to Baptism. But Baptism is not refused, but only *delayed*, for weighty reasons such as I have mentioned. No doubt there are exceptionally firm and courageous characters whom the priest would feel bound to baptize, at the risk of parental anger.¹ Extreme

¹ There would, in such a case, be no violation on either side of parental rights, or connivance at disobedience; for the parental authority does not give any right to override the consciences of children. On the contrary, parents who do violence to them trespass on the rights of Almighty God over the soul He has made.

delicacy of health, which might at any moment place the petitioner's life in danger, would be another urgent reason for not putting off the applicant. Yet, where delay is insisted on, the salvation of the disappointed applicants can be sufficiently provided for by instructing them in the efficacy of acts of perfect contrition. If they died unbaptized, they would have all the benefit of a Baptism of *desire*.

As to the *dispositions* necessary for the *lawful* Baptism of adults, it must be observed that the Sacrament may not be given to those whose *evident* lack of dispositions exposes it to fruitless reception. By a *fruitless* Baptism is meant one that fails to produce its spiritual effect at the time of administration owing to some obstacle in the soul of the candidate. For, as we have seen, provided the person consent, the Baptism is *validly conferred*, the 'character' attached is duly impressed on the soul, and the Sacrament can never be repeated. But the Sacrament is an accomplished fact, and the proper dispositions have been wanting; its spiritual effect is suspended, and remains inoperative until such time as the receiver conceives those dispositions. Then, and not before, the latent force of the Sacrament is set free, and the soul is regenerated. It is, however, sinful to confer the Sacrament in the mere hope that the right dispositions may be developed later on.

Proper
disposi-
tions
to be
secured.

These needful dispositions are: (1) Faith; (2) sorrow for sins committed.

1. Faith. The candidate must *sincerely believe in the Catholic Faith* as resting upon God's unerring authority;¹ he must, also, repent of his sins from some supernatural motive revealed by Faith. *Perfect contrition* is not necessary (with actual Baptism).
2. Sorrow for personal sin. Sorrow, based on *filial* fear of Divine punishment, will suffice.

SPONSORS.

God-
parents.

A sponsor, otherwise called a godparent, is one who takes part in the solemn rite of Baptism (either in person, or by deputy), and *answers for the Catholic bringing up* of the baptized. 'Spiritual relationship' arises from fulfilling this responsible office, which forms a bar to *valid* marriage, of which more presently.

Eligible
persons.

Who may be sponsors? Any Catholic having the use of reason. But, according to the 'Roman Ritual,' it is most desirable that 'infants'—*i.e.*, boys under twelve and girls under fourteen—should not be chosen for the office.

Not
eligible.

The following are *excluded* from the office:

1. Non-Catholics. This is obvious from the very nature of the chief duty demanded of a godparent. Sometimes non-Catholics, for one reason or another, are most anxious to act as godparents to the children of Catholics, and there may be good reasons for not altogether thwarting their desires. Sponsors they cannot be. But there appears no convincing reason why—in

¹ See volume, 'Letters on Christian Doctrine,' First Series, No. III. p. 25, 'Explicit Faith.'

England, at least—they should not be allowed to figure at the ceremony as witnesses merely. This plan might save them the mortification of blank refusal, when there is good reason for sparing them that pain.

2. Publicly excommunicated persons.

3. Notorious criminals—*i.e.*, those who have publicly disgraced themselves by some grave crime. Neglect of Easter duties does not seem to be classed under this head by the common law of the Church.

4. Members of 'Regular' Religious Orders of men or women (Bishops excepted) in the strict canonical sense.

5. The father and mother of the person to be baptized, since they would contract a mutual matrimonial disability by acting as sponsors to their own child.

The Nature of a Godparent's Obligation.

This obligation is to *secure*, as far as possible, the Catholic bringing up of the godchild, an obligation which *ceases* once the child has been sufficiently instructed in such truths as concern it. The child is then considered to have ended his spiritual infancy. In practice, when the parents are Catholic, the sponsor may presume, until the contrary becomes evident, that due instruction will be provided by the parents, who, of course, are *primarily* responsible. The sponsor only has this responsibility in default of parents, or others who have charge of the child in their place. Though

Duty of
God-
parents.

in the latter event the duty binding sponsors is a *grave* one, speaking theoretically, yet these will often be excused from acting by some insuperable difficulty—*e.g.*, where the Catholic parents are irreligious, and will allow no interference in the matter.

Conditions for incurring the Responsibility of Sponsor.

How duty
is con-
tracted.

1. The person must *mean* to incur it, besides being present (in person or by deputy).

2. At the ceremony the would-be sponsor must be in *physical contact* with the candidate during the pouring of the water. But in order to comply with this condition it is not necessary (as Rome has declared) that the sponsor should take the child into his (or her) own arms in order to present it formally to the priest for Baptism; but it is enough that the sponsor should be connected with the bearer by means of keeping a hand upon the child, and should accompany the bearer at the pouring of the water. It is *also* sufficient that the godparent should receive the child from the font after the pouring of water, either directly from the priest, or indirectly through the hands of the nurse or bearer.

It is also equally sufficient if the sponsor either take the child and present it to the priest, or else receive the child from the hands of the priest or from the nurse immediately after the said administration. Of course the prevailing practice of actually placing the hand on the child during the

Baptism is more than sufficient. What we have said of the *physical* action of the sponsor applies equally to a deputy, who, however, will not mean to become sponsor, nor contract any duties towards the baptized.

How many, and of what sex, should sponsors be? Number and sex.

In a *private* Baptism—*e.g.*, one given in private by a lay person in case of necessity, or by a priest conditionally at the reception of a convert—no sponsors are *prescribed* by the Church.

But in the ordinary *solemn* administration in church or chapel *one* sponsor at least is obligatory under pain of mortal sin. If only one stand, that one need not necessarily be of the same sex as the child. If there be *two*, the largest number lawful, they should be male and female respectively, and not both of the *same* sex as the child, still less both of a *different* sex. This last irregularity is the more objectionable as multiplying matrimonial ‘impediments’ from *spiritual relationship*.

This impediment, instituted by the Church out of reverence for those two great Sacraments—Baptism and Confirmation—arises mutually between the following: Impediment incurred.

1. Between the baptizer, the baptized, and the parents of the baptized.

2. Between the sponsor, the godchild, and its parents. Thus no impediment is created between *baptizer* and *sponsors*.

These rules, though seemingly complicated, become fairly simple if we eliminate the following The practical upshot.

instances as being of highly improbable application: (a) The impediment as between the baptizing *priest* on the one side, and the child and its parents on the other: for sacerdotal celibacy disqualifies for matrimony quite independently. (b) Between a *lay baptizer* and the *sponsors*, and between the *sponsors at a lay Baptism* and the *godchild*: for *lay Baptism*, being 'private,' requires no sponsors, and even if people should volunteer to function as such, they contract no spiritual relationship. (c) Between the *baptized* and his (or her) *parents*—i.e., on the score of Baptism merely.

So, for all practical purposes, we may reduce the cases where 'relationship' is established to these: (1) Between each of the *sponsors* and the *godchild*, not between one sponsor and the other; (2) between the *sponsors* and the *parents*; (3) between the *lay baptizer* and the *baptized*, as well as the *parents* of the latter.

According to the milder interpretation of the law now prevailing, a parent who *baptizes* his (or her) child, whether in a case of necessity or not, contracts no spiritual relationship with the other parent.

An undesirable practice?

Wholesale Sponsorship.—What is to be thought of a practice sometimes followed? In some parish or other a priest's housekeeper, or a particular lady of the congregation, stands as godmother in Baptism to any number of poor children. Her charitable zeal deserves praise, and such readiness to oblige in this way is, no doubt, a decided convenience. But is there not some rashness here?

I am not presuming to speak in absolute condemnation of the proceeding. Yet, seeing that the responsibility thus incurred is *real and grave*, it seems necessary to counsel *moderation* and *caution* in assuming the same. At least, it appears imprudent for any one person to assemble a numerous family of godchildren without knowing whether the parents are well or ill disposed towards the practice of their religion. For it is to be borne in mind that when the parents (who are, of course, *primarily* responsible) neglect their duty towards the souls of their children, the office of sponsor at once ceases to be a sinecure, and calls for action. And so it can hardly be conscientious to saddle oneself with more duties of this kind than one can reasonably expect to satisfy.

No. VII.

CONFIRMATION.

Place
in the
Christian
system.

WHEN a child is born into this world its newly-received bodily life requires to be nourished and strengthened in order that so frail a piece of humanity may eventually develop into a robust and full-grown man or woman. So is it, too, after the soul has been 'born again of water and the Holy Ghost': a fresh Sacrament comes to strengthen and *confirm* the supernatural life imparted to it in Baptism—the Sacrament of Confirmation.

A heap of
mercies.

Here we may pause a moment in grateful admiration of the tender thoughtfulness and care with which the Sacred Heart vouchsafes to men a special Sacrament at every turn, and for every spiritual emergency. Hardly has He given us life through Baptism than He hastens to our aid with another store of spiritual grace for the purpose of confirming that supernatural life and fostering our growth 'into the perfect man . . . unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ.'¹ Then, before we have travelled far in life, our souls become defiled with the mire of sin that lies so thick upon the highway of this world of concupiscence, and Penance is at hand to

¹ Eph. iv. 13.

exchange our travel-stained garments for the cleanly robe of justice. But foot-sore pilgrims need something more than change of raiment: they grow faint for want of food. And so our watchful Lord, presiding in the hostelry of His Catholic Church, spreads out before us the heavenly banquet of His very Flesh and Blood, in the Holy Eucharist. Thus our weakened forces are repaired, and we can journey on again, and ever upward, until we safely reach the mount of God. But ways of life may differ widely. Some start together on the path of wedded life, and these are closely linked together for their mutual support in a hallowed union, cemented by a fresh outpouring of the Precious Blood in Holy Matrimony. Thence they draw the grace they need for keeping faithfully their pledge of life-long fellowship, and for rearing unto God the children He may send to give gladness to their pilgrimage. Others, again, are 'called by God like Aaron' to guide their fellow-travellers heavenward and minister to them these very Sacraments of Christ. A still more arduous journey, this, and full of pitfalls, needing all powers and helps bestowed on priest and bishop in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Yet, however far apart the different courses taken, each and all must cross the ocean towards the journey's end to reach the port of Heaven, and shall meet in common rendezvous without the sombre harbour-mouth of death. No child of fallen Adam but is doomed to toss awhile upon those seas which surge and tumble in fierce

confusion about the narrow entrance. And then it is that our ever-faithful Saviour stretches forth once more His hand of power, as of old, to still the tempest raised by Satan over the dying Christian's shuddering barque, and, casting the soothing Oil of Holy Extreme Unction upon the troubled waters, He nerves each timid soul to make the inevitable passage within the port in peace and confidence. Truly does the love of Christ sustain our struggling souls with numerous helps and safeguards. But now we must turn to drier topics, and view the Sacrament of strength from a more technical standpoint.

'Matter'
and
'form'
example.

Every Sacrament consists of *form* and *matter*. The last-named, when taken apart from the ceremonial in which it is employed, is termed *remote matter*; or, if considered in connexion with the same, *proximate matter*. Thus, in Baptism, the *remote matter* is water, and the *proximate matter* is the use to which the water is put—*i.e.*, *the pouring of water*. The form consists of the words pronounced during the said pouring—'I baptize thee,' etc. In the case of Confirmation, theologians are not unanimous in determining the matter of the Sacrament. This may appear strange at first sight. We must, however, remember that the Church does not know everything, but only as much as Christ has chosen to include in the treasury of doctrine which He originally committed to the keeping of His Apostles. This is a truth to be borne in mind with reference to many doctrinal puzzles that

beset our minds, and to which no answer seems to be forthcoming.

‘How, then, can we be sure that Confirmation is validly conferred upon us?’ some one may ask in dismay. The answer is, that these differences among theologians as to what is the *sufficient* ‘matter’ do not *practically* affect the security of the Sacrament—*i.e.*, as long as the *rite appointed by the Church* be carried out as fixed. For this we *do* know—that the Church cannot err by prescribing what is *doubtfully* sufficient for imparting the sacramental graces which Christ intended. So, whatever be the essential matter of Confirmation, we have absolute certainty of its being supplied in the course of the appointed ritual. Moreover, the Church teaches that it is a grievous sin of sacrilege to expose a Sacrament to frustration by omitting any notable portion of the prescribed rite on the strength of theological speculations, however sound these may be from an academic point of view.

It would serve no useful purpose to discuss the various opinions alluded to in such pages as the present. I will only give the safe *maximum* of what theologians require for correct administration, and point out the *fullest* matter and form as found in the approved rite.

The *remote* matter, then, consists of the *Bishop’s hands* and the *consecrated olive oil mixed with balm*, called technically ‘*chrism*.’¹ The *proximate* matter and form of Confirmation.

¹ The Church in her various ceremonies uses three kinds of holy oils. Every year these are separately blessed with

matter is the *imposition of episcopal hands as involved in the act of signing the candidate with chrism*. The full form of the Sacrament (or words accompanying the signing with chrism) runs as follows: 'I sign thee with the sign of the Cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

THE MINISTER OF CONFIRMATION.

Who may confirm?

The minister is, ordinarily, a Bishop only; but for grave occasions—*e.g.*, to meet the needs of foreign missions, where ministers having episcopal consecration may be scarce—an ordinary priest

much solemnity and appropriate prayers by the Bishop and his clergy in the cathedral church during Mass on Maundy Thursday. They are as follows: A., oil for catechumens; B., oil for the sick; C., chrism, consisting of blessed oil and balsam. A. is used alone in the ordination of priests for anointing those digits of either hand in which the Blessed Sacrament is held, and, with chrism, in the extra ceremonies of baptism, blessing of the font on Holy Saturday, and the consecration of churches and altars for the Holy Sacrifice. B. is used alone in the rite of Extreme Unction, and with chrism in blessing church bells, probably in view of the Catholic custom of tolling for prayers in behalf of a dying Catholic. C. is employed in the consecration of Bishops, of chalice and paten, and for anointing Catholic sovereigns at their solemn coronation. *Olive* oil is the material prescribed. When one kind of holy oil is said to be used 'with' another, no physical mixture is implied, but only that each oil is employed at some part of the ceremony in question.

may be deputed to confer the Sacrament. This faculty is usually granted to *Prefects* Apostolic, who, unlike *Vicars* Apostolic, have not received episcopal consecration.¹ Such ministers 'extraordinary,' however, cannot consecrate the holy oil: the power to do this is reserved to Bishops.

A Bishop, in virtue of his consecration, has always the *power* to confirm; but, if excommunicated, or belonging to a schismatical body, he would confirm unlawfully, and, supposing knowledge on his part, sinfully. Thus, for example, the Russian 'Popes' or Bishops, who belong to the Greek Schismatical Church, self-called 'Orthodox,' confirm validly, since Greek Orders are valid—unlike the Anglican.²

THE CANDIDATE.

Any *baptized* person is capable of receiving Confirmation. But if possessed of reason, the candidate must have the *will* to be confirmed. Moreover, for *lawfully* receiving the Sacrament, the state of

¹ See Appendix I., p. 377.

² Hence, when an Anglican is received into the Catholic Church, Confirmation is administered to him unconditionally as a matter of course and without inquiry, although he may have been subjected to the Anglican rite of Confirmation. It is otherwise—as we have seen—with regard to Anglican Baptism, no Orders being *essential* to the validity of that Sacrament. The Greek Church—to judge from several known instances—holds precisely the same attitude towards Anglican Confirmation ceremonies.

grace is required, since Confirmation is a Sacrament of the 'living'—*i.e.*, is meant for those already in possession of the life of grace.

We have already seen that the three Sacraments 'of the living' imprint a hidden spiritual mark, or 'character,' upon the soul which is indelible for ever, and hence they can never be validly received a second time. It is, perhaps, well to repeat this in connexion with Confirmation. Cases are occasionally met with of simple or ignorant people presenting themselves several times for this Sacrament, even on one and the same occasion. One instance is reported of a man who, on being remonstrated with by the confirming Bishop for coming up again, whispered confidentially in his lordship's ears in his own defence: 'Saving your lordship's presence, but that reverend gentleman standing on your lordship's right keeps a-rubbin' of it off as fast as you put it on'—an obvious allusion to the assistant priest, whose duty it is reverently to wipe off the holy chrism with cotton-wool before the person just anointed retires to his place. Our friend clearly mistook the sacred unction for a physical remedy.

AGE FOR CONFIRMATION.

Amongst us Confirmation is very often given after first Communion. But there is no theological necessity for this very common practice, which seems also to fall in with a suggestion of the Roman Catechism. Leo XIII., however, in a

letter (June 22, 1897) to the Bishop of Marseilles, who had abolished the above usage, points out the advantage of conferring Confirmation sooner, but, of course, not before the age of reason has been reached, the Council of Trent being averse to infant Confirmation. His Holiness dwells upon the great advantage of opening out this source of additional grace to younger children before evil inclinations can have taken root.¹ In the early Church—and the practice still obtains by force of ancient custom in some Eastern communities—Confirmation was given to infants immediately after Baptism.

OBLIGATION OF CONFIRMATION.

Is a Catholic *seriously* bound to receive Confirmation? Some have maintained that the omission would be a mortal sin—at all events, if an opportunity of being confirmed presented itself. But, as the late Professor of Moral Theology, Père Génicot, points out, no satisfactory proof of any such obligation can be drawn, either from the nature of the Sacrament, which is not necessary for salvation, or from any document, Divine or ecclesiastical. It would, of course, be grievously sinful to neglect it out of *contempt*, as though Confirmation were a worthless trifle. But here the sin would lie in despising so Divine a gift, and not in omitting to receive it, just as would be the case

Extent of
obligation.

¹ The same attitude towards the needs of these younger ones has been adopted by the Holy See with regard to Frequent and Daily Communion (see p. 163).

if a woman, for example, despised the Sacrament of Orders, although there could be no question of her being ordained.

SPONSORS.

Number
and sex of
sponsors.

In solemn Confirmation there must be *one god-parent*, and, contrary to what is laid down for Baptism, that one must be of *the same sex* as the candidate. *Given sufficient need*, one sponsor may stand for many candidates; otherwise two god-children *per* sponsor is the maximum allowance, saving an indult from the Holy See.

Age of
sponsor.

The sponsor must have *completed* his or her *fourteenth* year of age, and must, moreover, have *received Confirmation*. 'Spiritual relationship' is contracted as in Baptism, and with the same effects as to *impediments*. The same classes of persons are excluded from the office, but with this extension, prescribed by law, that defaulters in the matter of 'Easter duties' are ineligible, as well as public offenders of the grosser sort. This further restriction, however, applies strictly to missionary countries only, since the instruction notifying it was addressed to them.¹

How
obliga-
tion con-
tracted.

In order to contract the obligations of sponsorship, the godparent must touch the candidate during the essential part of the Confirmation rite—*i.e.*, while the Bishop is ministering to the individual candidate. With us this is effected by the sponsor keeping a hand upon the shoulder of the candidate. Another way sometimes adopted is

¹ See p. 56.

for the candidate to place one foot upon a foot of the sponsor.

EFFECT OF CONFIRMATION.

Our Catechism tells us that, in Confirmation, 'we receive the Holy Ghost,' and this 'in order to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ.' In what sense is the Holy Ghost 'received'?

'Receiving the Holy Ghost.'

Clearly, not that we receive Him then for the first time, as though He had never come to us before. For, besides that universal presence of the Triune God, which in the natural order permeates every atom and fibre of creation, man included, all three Divine Persons dwell in still closer intimacy within the soul of one who is in the 'state of grace.' 'If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and *we will come to him, and make our abode with him.*'¹ This supernatural indwelling of the Paraclete in the just soul forms a necessary sequel to our grace of adoption as sons. 'God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.'² And even should we lose the Divine Guest by mortal sin, we must needs woo Him back again by repentance ere we can lawfully present ourselves for Confirmation. Hence the simple possession of grace involves the presence of the Holy Ghost within us. Our reception of Him, therefore, in Confirmation must mean something

¹ St. John xiv. 23. ² Gal. iv. 6. See also Rom. vii. 16. 'C

more than this. It means that He then takes over the possession of the soul *in a new and very special manner*, sealing it with a fresh sacramental 'character' as His very own, adorning it with His *seven gifts*, enriching it with His *twelve fruits*. We might compare the difference of His indwelling before and after Confirmation to the Real Sacramental Presence of our Lord in a church that has been merely *blessed* as a temporary place of worship, and then, again, in one *finally set aside* for His permanent abode by solemn episcopal consecration, and marked for ever with the consecration crosses.

The Holy Ghost is the gift we receive, and He is given to us in order *to strengthen us for our Christian warfare against spiritual enemies*.

Importance of Confirmation.

One need only state this in order to make it plain how important it must be not to miss being confirmed. We know, from the wondrous transformation wrought in the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost, what the Holy Ghost *can* effect in the soul. Those twelve timid and, for the most part, illiterate and tactless fishermen—till then hiding away in holes and corners 'for fear of the Jews'—had no sooner been endowed with the Holy Spirit from on high than they stood forth, fearless and determined, to preach Christ crucified, and to rebuke a powerful world for its unbelief, its overweening pride, its insatiable avarice, and its degrading lusts. That power of the Spirit is certainly not shortened. Then, is our need of it diminished?

The world through which we have to fight our way to Heaven is not different in its essential spirit from that which the Apostles had to face and conquer. Human philosophy, false ethical standards, now as then, war against the teachings of faith; the love of money, with its attendant advantages, threatens to quench all desire for the things of God; material progress and its multiplied luxuries supply a thousand incentives to our innate sensuality; countless forms of pleasurable excitement and frivolity threaten to destroy all steadiness of purpose in God's service; ridicule, and often the petty tyrannies of bigotry, pursue the convert to the Faith or to reformed living—these are some of the assaults against which we would fain defend ourselves. Then, would it not be sheerest folly to deprive ourselves of the spiritual weapons which Confirmation places at our disposal? Putting aside the question of any strict *duty* to receive this Sacrament, at all events we should inflict a heavy *loss* upon ourselves by giving the go-by to such sorely needed graces. It is loss enough to forfeit nothing more than the additional measure of heavenly bliss and glory for all eternity reserved for those whom the 'finger of the Father's right hand' has signed and sealed. For this reason alone, it were *expedient* (when possible) that even senseless infants at the point of death should not be allowed to die without Confirmation being added to their Baptism.

To those who are no longer children, or who have, perhaps, advanced far on in life—especially if

Our great needs.

A convert's trial.

naturally sensitive—the ordeal of a public Confirmation service may prove a somewhat heavy tax upon their humility or moral courage. But then, the cost is small enough in comparison with the rich benefit received. Still, there is nothing to prevent such persons using any opportunity that may occur for securing Confirmation under circumstances of greater privacy, or in some distant church, where they will pass unknown.

The
convert's
courage.

To any thinking person it must surely prove a source of greatest edification to see—as, thank God, we often do—the middle-aged, or even older, folk presenting themselves with brave simplicity for Confirmation in company with little children. The Sacred Heart must surely love such single-minded eagerness for Its loving spiritual gifts, and reward the same with exceptional blessings.

No. VIII.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST.

SECTION I.—INSTITUTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

IN the order of Sacraments given by the Council of Trent the Eucharist comes next after Baptism and Confirmation.

To some this order may appear strange, for, in the routine of Catholic practice, Confession, or the Sacrament of Penance, usually precedes Holy Communion. Children, as a rule, make their First Confession some years before they are admitted to their First Communion. Yet there is a good reason for the order of Trent. Baptism gives us spiritual life, Confirmation strengthens our hold upon that life of grace, and Holy Eucharist, with its Heavenly Food, repairs and nourishes the same when in danger of failing from weakness. The need of Penance, on the contrary, may be regarded as an accidental one, arising as it does from the occurrence of some unlooked-for mortal sickness of soul, contracted by a perverse use of our own free will. The Sacrament of Penance, therefore, is an episode in our soul's history quite foreign to its normal course as God intends it. Perhaps it is only because this episode of sin, with

Reason of
Trent's
order.

the consequent need of Penance, occurs, alas ! so frequently in the lives of men that we are disposed to assign to the Sacrament of Penance a higher place on the list.

Practice
of early
Church.

Besides the above theological reason, the practice of the early Church gives us a clue to the order adopted by the Council of Trent, the one we shall here follow. In earlier centuries—and the practice still survives in some Oriental communities—it was customary to administer the Holy Eucharist (under the form of wine), as well as Confirmation, to infants immediately after Baptism. In their case there could have been no question of Sacramental Absolution.

Unique
dignity of
Eucharist.

Yet, although the Eucharist is placed third upon the list of Sacraments, it nevertheless stands easily first in point of excellence and intrinsic dignity. It is not, indeed, as indispensably necessary for salvation as Baptism, since a baptized infant who has not received Holy Communion and dies is certain of immediate admission into the Kingdom of God. But it excels all other Sacraments in its nature. The other Sacraments contain and impart grace, but the Eucharist contains within it the Author of life and grace Himself.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST.

The Last
Supper.

As the Catechism of the Council of Trent explains, this Blessed Sacrament was instituted by our Lord at that Last Supper which He took with

His Apostles on the night of His betrayal to the Jews.

He took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave to His disciples, saying, 'This is My Body.' His infinite power, already several times miraculously exerted upon material substances—as at the Marriage Feast in Cana, and in the two multiplications of loaves—actually wrought the wonder which His words signified. These words were not declaratory merely, but effected there and then what they expressed.

Our Lord did not say; 'This is a *figure* of My Body—this is in future to be to you a *reminder* of My Body, or of My Passion and Death,' though the Eucharist is that inclusively. He did add the injunction to His Apostles: 'Do this for a commemoration of Me.'¹ But this is evidently a command, carrying with it the power to do the selfsame thing that He Himself had just done; and that which He had done—as the plain and obvious meaning of the words convey—was to give to His chosen twelve, under the outward appearance of bread, His own true Body. And what has been said of that Body applies also to the chalice—'the new testament in My Blood.'² He gave us both His Sacred Body and His Precious Blood for the nourishment of our hungry souls.

Many years ago, in a Lancashire village, there lived a sturdy farmer, X, a Protestant of the old style. He was an earnest and devout man, and

Example
of their
effect.

¹ St. Luke xxii. 19.

² St. Luke xxii. 20; 1 Cor. xi. 25.

read his Bible regularly with thought and diligence. Certainly his manner of using the Scriptures was of that 'prayerful' kind which some Protestants, deprived of any infallible external guide to God's meaning of the Book, hold to be a sure *recipe* for arriving at that meaning. Often had honest X read those mysterious words, 'This is My Body,' and been struck by them as though possibly containing a deeper meaning than entered into his religious beliefs. '*This is My Body*,' he reflected. Those were the plain English words. The Lord said it was His Body, and, to one of his simple-minded nature, it began to appear evident that if the Lord *said* that, why, He *meant* that, and nothing short of it; or, as he put it in his homely way, and without any intentional irreverence, 'Likely, the Lord would call a spade a spade.' All the while he was well convinced that the clergyman under whom he sat so regularly Sunday after Sunday did not uphold the literal meaning of our Lord's words. He went to consult his pastor on the point. The latter explained that the sentence did not mean precisely what appeared upon the surface—that Christ spoke figuratively; that the bread and wine were but a symbol of His Body and Blood, to be received with faith in Him for the spiritual benefit of the soul.

Our matter-of-fact farmer, however, was dissatisfied with what seemed to him an evasion of the full force of the Divine utterance. In spite of all the clergyman could say, he still insisted that the Lord would be sure 'to call a spade a

spade,' and ended by declaring to his horrified pastor that he would look for a Church that made out our Lord to be as good as His word. Accordingly he made various inquiries as to the meaning of the text from ministers in the neighbourhood, but without getting the satisfaction he sought.

While still puzzling over the difficulty, he chanced one day to meet a priest attached to a neighbouring Catholic college, who was going upon his round of parochial visits. X. at once determined to put the case to him. There is no need to specify what answer he got. As soon as our farmer learnt that the Catholic Church agreed with his 'spade' theory, he was quite triumphant, and eventually was received into the Church, and died a pious death in the same.

This example, taken from real life, may serve to show what effect our Lord's words were calculated to produce in the minds of those simple-minded fishermen of Galilee. They would not have looked for any figurative meaning in them; nor, indeed, was there any such that would be likely to suggest itself to their minds. For the antecedent aptitude of bread to represent a body, and of wine to represent blood, would have been anything but obvious to them.

I do not say that in point of fact absolutely no precedent could be found for such symbolism. But it was not a usual one, and would never have occurred to the uncultured disciples. True, our Lord 'spoke in parables,' but always in ones suited to the comprehension of the most unlettered

of his Jewish hearers—and, with one or two exceptions, those who sat before Him belonged to that illiterate class. Had they understood the solemn utterance in a literal sense when it was not intended, our Lord would, according to His wont, have added other words and expressions, giving a clue to the figurative character of His pronouncement.

False
parallels.

Thus, there is no parallel whatever between 'This is My Body' and such statements as, 'I am the Door—the Vine—the Way,' if the conditions under which these other expressions were used be taken into account. Besides, grammatical parallelism is also wanting. Hence the Catholic Church, while understanding these other phrases figuratively without the faintest hesitation, has, from the beginning, as unhesitatingly accepted the words of Institution in absolute literalness. She believes, and has ever believed, with the simple faith of children, that at those tremendous words, and by a miracle of Divine power, Christ substituted His very Body and Blood in the place of the natural substances of bread and wine.

The priest
obeys
Christ.

She also teaches, and has ever taught, that whenever those Divine words are pronounced at Mass by her ordained priests, in obedience to, and in memory of Him, that which makes bread to be bread and wine to be wine (and not any other material substances) ceases there and then to be present, and gives place to the substance of Christ's Body and Blood, though the outward semblance of bread and wine is still maintained

by Divine power as a real, and not illusive, object to our various senses.

The evidence of those senses does not *contradict* ‘Appear-
the teaching of our faith; indeed, it cannot, ^{ances’} not an
from the nature of the case. For no sense of the ^{illusion.}
human body can explore the inmost constitution
of natural substances. Neither microscope nor
dissecting-knife is equal to the task. ‘What do I
know about matter?’ wrote J. H. Newman. ‘As
much as the most learned man on earth, and that
is just nothing at all.’ As I look reverently upon
the Sacred Host at Exposition, I may think that
I see bread. But I do nothing of the sort. What
is borne in upon my sight is not the nature of
bread, but its outward and sensible appearance,
and it is this that affects my visual organ; and
the effect can still be produced upon my sight
even in the absence of the inner nature of bread,
granting that there is a power competent to main-
tain the *immediate* cause of that effect. There is
only one Power that can do this—that which was
able to create material substance, and transform
or multiply it by His only Will.¹

This belief in the Real and Substantial Presence ^{A Pro-}
of our Lord in the Eucharist is as old as Chris- ^{testant}
tianity itself. And this fact is not to be disposed ^{fallacy.}
of by calling attention—as non-Catholics often do
—to the historic fact that it was not till the Middle
Ages that the Church adopted from her theological
schools the term ‘Transubstantiation,’ merely as
a convenient philosophic name wherewith to label

¹ St. John ii. 9, vi. 11; St. Luke ix. 16, 17.

—not to initiate—her faith in the wondrous change effected in the Eucharist.

Literal
meaning
evident.

No other interpretation than the literal one of the words '*This is My Body*' satisfies their form and character. The copulating 'is,' used without any modification or explanation on our Lord's part, refutes reception by faith alone—disposes of any merely figurative, 'spiritual,' or moral presence of His Body and Blood. Again, our Lord's statement would be falsified by that simultaneous presence side by side of the Body and Blood *with* the natural substances of bread and wine defended by Lutheranism, to which the names of Consubstantiation, or Impanation have been assigned.¹ Christ did not say, '*This contains My Body*,' but '*This is*' (in its nature or substance) '*My Body*.' But Catholic belief does not rest exclusively upon interpretations of Bible texts, however rational, but on the teaching of the Church, the infallible interpreter of the written Word.

'Spiritual
pres-
ence?'

I said just now that our Lord's sentence did away with the false theory of a merely 'spiritual' presence. The use of the term 'spiritual' is, of course, unorthodox as applied to the *fact of the Real Presence itself*. We see it sometimes so applied in non-Catholic doctrinal explanations.

¹ I do not mean that these two false theories are identical. For the 'Impanation' of Ossiander supposes that the Word assumed the nature of bread in the Eucharist, just as by His Incarnation He assumed the nature of man. But the two errors are put together as both involving the simultaneous presence of the substances, and of Christ.

But, although generally avoided by Catholic theologians on account of possible misapprehension, the epithet is *capable* of an orthodox sense if applied solely to the *manner* (or mode) in which the *real* and *substantial* Body and Blood of Christ dwells beneath the outward species of bread and wine. To deal only with that Body—It exists, in Its glorified state, under the species, rather after the manner in which the spiritual soul of man inhabits the human body—inasmuch as It is not to be weighed or measured, nor is It commensurate part by part with corresponding parts of the Sacred Host. Thus, we cannot say that there is less of the Sacred Body in a fragment of the Host than in the whole of It, any more than we should say that the spiritual soul of a tiny infant was ‘smaller’ than that of a giant.

Of the possibility of a real human body existing after so marvellous a manner we have, indeed, no instance in our experience of this universe. But that the Blessed Sacrament is not the only instance of the marvel may be plainly deduced from the Gospel account of our Lord’s resurrection. For when the stone—previously sealed, and guarded—had been rolled away, the sepulchre was already empty. The Body of Christ must, therefore, have freed Itself of the usual limitations restricting ordinary material bodies. Then the invocation contained in Our Lady’s Litany, ‘Mother inviolate,’ reminds us of a further instance of the marvel we have been considering.

Analogous wonders.

No. IX.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

INSTITUTION FORESHADOWED.

SPEAKING of the impression which our Lord's institutional words would have made upon the minds of listeners, I said that the assembled Apostles would not have been prepared to understand the statement, '*This is My Body*,' in a figurative or metaphorical sense, in the absence of any guidance to that effect on our Lord's part.

But this is putting things far too mildly. One ought rather to say that these disciples had been *distinctly prepared* for accepting the statement in all its literal marvellousness by the express teaching of their Divine Master, as recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel.

Promise
of the Eu-
charist.

Our Lord's action at the Last Supper was but the fulfilment of what He had already foreshadowed in their hearing to the multitudes who had shipped across the Sea of Galilee to Capharnaum in quest of Him, after His first miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes for feeding the five thousand. To this wonderful discourse, which our Lord addressed to the crowd that flocked around Him, we will now turn our attention.¹

¹ For a most masterly analysis of this discourse, see Cardinal Wiseman's '*Six Lectures on the Holy Eucharist*.'

In this discourse upon 'the bread of life,' our Lord begins by urging upon His audience the duty of feeding spiritually upon Him, *by faith* in Him—faith in His Divine mission, and hence in whatever He should teach them.¹ And well might He first insist upon the necessity of a strong, unquestioning faith as an indispensable preparation for accepting on His word the stupendous mystery He was about to announce to them! Not without reason does the Church in her venerable liturgy of Holy Mass speak of the Eucharist as *par excellence* 'the mystery of faith.' Christ, then, in the first instance discoursed upon faith.

But no one who thoughtfully reads verse 51 and the verses following can fail to notice that the Divine Teacher has now advanced from the subject of faith to an *entirely new point of doctrine*, the preceding verses, 48-50, appearing to supply the transition from one point to the other.

Perhaps nowhere do the pages of the New Testament present us with a discourse of our Lord more perfectly connected than the present one. There seems, moreover, to be none developed upon a plan more easily intelligible to a modern frequenter of sermons.

For, analyzing the discourse, one might say that the Divine Preacher here delivers a sermon, taking for His text, 'I am the Bread of Life,' and then proceeding to develop that text in two distinct but closely connected points. In the first portion of His discourse He teaches the

Our
Lord's
Sermon.

Text and
division.

¹ Ver. 32-40.

necessity of a *spiritual* and *mental* feeding upon Himself—the Heavenly Bread—*by faith*, without making the faintest allusion to His Body and Blood. In the second portion He urges the obligation of a *real* and *literal* reception of His Body and Blood for the nourishment of the Christian soul unto eternal life.

Two
distinct
doctrines.

The *ways* in which He expresses Himself in the one part and in the other are *entirely different*. In the first, we have: ‘I am the Bread of life. He that *cometh* to Me shall not hunger, and he that *believeth* in Me shall not thirst.’¹ But in the second part metaphor is gradually abandoned, and He declares: ‘I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven. If any man *eat* of this Bread, he shall live for ever. And the Bread that I will give is *My flesh*, for the life of the world.’

Jews
perceived
the
change.

It is abundantly clear, too, that the Jews, who heard our Lord, themselves *perceived* the difference between the drift of the first and that of the second part of His address. When, in the former, He had declared it to be the Father’s will that whoever ‘seeth the Son and believeth in Him may have everlasting life,’² the Jews murmured against the claim put forth to a Divine mission, throwing in His face the known obscurity of His worldly status: ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then saith He, *I came down from Heaven?*’³ But when Jesus alters His expressions and states that ‘if

¹ Ver. 35.

² Ver. 40.

³ Ver. 41.

any man *eat* of this bread,' immediately explaining that it consisted of '*My flesh*, for the life of the world,' the whole character of the murmuring changes. Now it is: 'How can this man *give us His flesh to eat*?' It is the practical impossibility—as it seemed to them—of actually partaking of His true Flesh and Blood that they feel. There can be no doubt, then, as to the murmuring audience being well aware, in the second stage of Christ's sermon, that it was no longer a question of a metaphorical reception of this Bread of Life by means of faith, but of a *real* eating and reception within the individual.

Now, if this literal interpretation by the Jews had been simply a mistake—and hence, by its very nature, a most *serious* one—we should expect to find our Lord disabusing the objectors of their stupid blunder. Does He explain away the literal force of His words? No, He does *precisely the contrary*. He insists upon it with redoubled force. He emphasizes it in the most solemn and impressive terms: '*Amen, amen, I say unto you, except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you.*'¹ Again: '*He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life. . . .*'² And again: '*My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed.*'³ And again: '*He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him.*'⁴ And yet again, combining *both* points of His discourse: 'As the living Father hath sent

How
Christ
met the
objection.

¹ Ver. 54.

² Ver. 55.

³ Ver. 56.

⁴ Ver. 57.

Me, and I live by the Father : so he that *eateth Me*, the same also shall live by *Me*.'¹ Our Lord then concludes, harking back—as an ordinary preacher often does—to His original text : '*This is the Bread that came down from Heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever.*'²

This reiteration of His positive statement, without a shadow of retractation or amendment, is the only answer our Lord gives to the second murmuring of the Jews.

The
result.

What was the result of it all ? St. John tells us : '*Many of His own disciples now began to murmur also, saying : This saying is hard, and who can bear it ?*'³ (Not, then, without need had Jesus begun with a lesson upon *faith*.) But a worse evil now followed : '*Many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.*'⁴ The melancholy pathos of the appeal which this defection on the part of some of His own followers now drew from our Lord reveals the disappointment and grief of His tender Heart : '*Jesus said to the twelve : Will you also go away ?*'⁵ That appeal went home straight to the loyal heart of Simon Peter, who, as usual, answering for the Apostolic band, exclaimed with loving enthusiasm : '*Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God.*' A bold profession of faith which, when repeated later

¹ Ver. 58.

² Ver. 59.

³ Ver. 61.

⁴ Ver. 67.

⁵ Ver. 68.

in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, obtained for the spokesman of the Apostles the Princedom of the Apostolate and the possession of the heavenly keys.¹

Now, my friends, in order the better to appreciate the doctrinal significance of our Lord's dealings with the multitude on the present occasion, let us forget our Catholic faith for one moment, and *suppose* that Christ did *not* intend to create the impression of literalness which His forcible and repeated language produced upon the Jews, and which, every one must admit, it was eminently calculated to produce.

*Reductio
ad
absurdum.*

Taking this (false) assumption, let us consider the crisis brought about by our Lord's words and conduct, and reduce it to its inevitable, but quite intolerable, consequences.

In this scandalizing of the crowd, we should have—under our supposition—no mere instance of that mystery, so harassing to some minds, the Divine *permission* of moral evil in the world, the non-intervention of God in evils proceeding from man's ill-use of his free will in opposition to the Divine law. For, in the incident we are noticing, we have the Son of God Himself, while exercising the responsible office of a religious teacher of men, and hence assuming all its weighty duties, utterly neglecting the *primary obligation of every teacher*—above all, of a religious one—namely, so to safeguard his utterances that these may not become the occasion of error to his pupils, nor scandalize

¹ St. Matt. xvi.

their religious or moral sense. (We remember the terrible warnings He once delivered against scandalizing even the least of His little ones.¹) Nay, we should have something still worse in the present case. We should behold a religious teacher refusing a simple word of explanation after his hearers had most *unmistakably manifested* their hurtful misapprehension of his unguarded expressions. In any person having the charge of instructing and guiding others, such neglect would not be simply to *permit* in others an evil of their own wilful seeking, but to become the responsible, guilty *cause* of it. And no one believing in the Divinity of Christ, or even in Christ as a Prophet among prophets approved by God, could possibly be blasphemous enough to attribute to Him such criminal negligence.

Here, then, we have the Divine Lover of souls, who descends from Heaven that He may become the Light of the world, and dispel from it 'the darkness' of error 'and the shadow of death' in which it has been seated for so long. His Heart is full of ineffable desire to kindle the holy fire which He came to cast upon the frosty world. He has come to 'give life,' and to give the same 'more abundantly.' Above all must He desire that His immediate disciples should rightly apprehend His life-giving doctrine, since it is they who are later on to bear faithful witness to the same unto the world at large. Therefore, *under our assumption*, when He saw the grievous scandal to

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 6.

the Jews created by too literal an understanding of His emphatic teaching, and that disciples, already won to His side, were being estranged from Him in considerable numbers, *is it conceivable* that He should have made Himself responsible for such extensive backsliding and spiritual loss *just for the want of one little word of explanation?* So far from this, He *must*, instead, have called to them, urgently, eagerly, and have cried unto them: ‘My children! My own children! depart not from Me and from the source of life eternal. Come back, all of you! You have utterly misunderstood one half of My discourse. I did not mean, in its latter part, that you must receive My *real* Body and Blood—that which stands before you. I only meant to impress on you once more a lesson which I had already taught at length, but which you thought was finished with. I meant no more than this—that you must just *believe* in Me, and thus, by a somewhat strained figure of speech, wrung from Me in My enthusiasm, “eat My Flesh and drink My Blood” for the “spiritual food of your souls.” ’ (!)

But Jesus did nothing of the kind. Rather than vouchsafe the easy word that would have removed the fatal error, He suffered those poor ignorant souls to go away unenlightened!

No more, I think, is needed for exposing in all its naked absurdity the false supposition we adopted for sake of argument—one, however, which is necessary to the controversial position of all Bible Christians who deny every sort of *Real Presence*, even the Lutheran. Con-
clusive.

Christ
means
what He
says.

The case is simple enough. Jesus said what He meant, and meant exactly what He said. (That there should be any need to declare it!) Rather than compromise His wondrous doctrine by a hair's breadth, He bore the bitter sorrow and disappointment of seeing those many souls depart from His light into the gloom. Not in order to lead the whole world captive to His sacred feet would He put it off with half a truth.

A moral
argument.

Those, however, who reject the literal force of our Lord's eucharistic teaching have yet another serious problem to count with. It is an unquestionable fact, attested by ecclesiastical documents and writings that have come down to us from the various centuries of Christianity, that in her belief in the Real Presence the Church has ever appealed with simple, childlike faith to the grammatically obvious meaning of our Lord's eucharistic utterances. Now, what does this fact involve? In the non-Catholic view, nothing less awful (or less incredible) than this: that millions upon millions of Christians in all ages, and among them the holiest and most learned that the world can boast of, have been woefully misled by their simple trust in the words of Christ into an inveterate, wholesale system of basest idolatry towards a piece of bread and a little wine, by the side of which the Parsee's cult of the sun would appear intelligent and respectable.

Did our Lord *know* that such would be the effect of His unqualified statements, not upon the unlettered and ignorant, not upon the evil-minded

and perverse, but upon the learned and acute-minded, upon the well-disposed, upon those who would seek before all else to know His will and to accomplish it? To deny that our Lord did foreknow all this would be blasphemy pure and undiluted. And yet, knowing this result to a certainty, He suffered His unexplained words to pollute the whole earth with idolatrous abomination, paying no regard to the earnestness and sincerity with which untold millions of souls would seek His saving truth! Let him credit this who can! For our part, we envy no man the power of thus caricaturing the Divine attributes of wisdom, charity, and justice. For, as we saw above, this would not be the ordinary problem of the Divine permission of evil.

No. X.

MAIN POINTS OF DOCTRINE.

THOUGH we shall soon have to turn our attention to the practical side of this Sacrament, it will be well first to summarize as briefly as may be the chief points of Catholic Eucharistic teaching, and to touch upon one or two difficulties that non-Catholics may put to us. To begin with:

Transub-
stantia-
tion.

1. *Points of Doctrine.*—The Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Christ are ‘truly, really, and substantially present’ in this Holy Sacrament, replacing the natural inner substances of the bread and wine, yet leaving intact those outward sensible qualities, or manifestations—of colour, taste, figure, weight, and the rest—which usually indicate the presence of those substances. The action upon our several senses—sight, taste, touch, etc.—of these qualities of material substance remains, after consecration, precisely the same as if there had never occurred that marvellous hidden transformation, conveniently and appropriately called by the Church ‘Transubstantiation,’ or the conversion of one substance into another.

Evidence
of the
senses.

How does this teaching of the Council of Trent bear upon the reliability of the evidence of our senses? If more closely examined, it will be

found to lend no favour to scepticism in this respect.

After Transubstantiation has taken place, and the Body and Blood of our Lord have replaced the substances of bread and wine, our senses still report truthfully what they are alone capable of reporting. For the same Divine power which effects the marvellous change of substance through the priest's ministry continues to sustain those qualities or objective activities which ordinarily affect our senses, and go to make up what we call the 'appearances,' or, to use the term of Trent, the 'species.' To these appearances only, and not to the inner constitution of material substance, are our senses capable of bearing witness—so that, for example, when, after the consecration of the elements at Mass, the eye seems to see, the palate to taste, the hands to feel, bread, these experiences are not subjective hallucinations. But the ultimate foundation of these real experiences is no longer the *substance* of bread, which has ceased to be there. The power of God supplies the office of that foundation. If, however, the *mind*, on the strength of these experiences, at once proceeds instinctively to *draw the inference* that bread is there—which would usually be correct—then only does error arise. But this is not an error of sense, but of reasoning, due to abnormal conditions. The Catholic knows from the teaching of Truth Itself, and of the infallible Church commissioned by Him to explain His teaching, that the Blessed Sacrament forms a *signal exception*

to the general rule that an object presenting the ordinary sensible qualities of bread can safely be inferred to be truly bread. But his reliance on the evidence of his senses for the common purposes of life remains unshaken.

Illustration.

Let us suppose that a skilful craftsman makes a perfect imitation of a choice apple. The material he chooses feels like an apple; he deftly paints it like an apple, and sprinkles some apple-juice upon it that it may smell like an apple. He shows it to me on a plate at dessert. I exclaim: 'What a luscious-looking Ribston-pippin!' Are my senses at fault? No. My sight derives the sensation of form and colour from the imitation fruit; my touch suggests an apple; my olfactory nerves are affected as by an apple. But the maker of the sham fruit, whom I know to be a trusty man, lets me into the secret, and by explaining the *ruse* corrects, *not* the evidence of my senses, but the *inference* which I drew from their testimony, and which, under normal conditions, would have been an infallibly true one. This somewhat imperfect illustration may help us in the present matter. In the unique case of the Blessed Sacrament it is the word of our Lord—'than which Word of Truth naught is truer,' to quote St. Thomas—that warns me against *drawing a false conclusion* from the faithful witness of my senses.

Christ whole under either 'kind.'

2. Both the Body and Blood of Christ are present *equally* under *either* appearance or 'species'—*i.e.*, of bread or of wine. This being the teaching of Catholic theology, it is useless for a non-

Catholic to urge against our faith that it *mutilates* the Sacrament through its present Western discipline of 'denying the cup' to lay communicants. A further point of doctrine suggests itself in this connexion :

3. When we speak of the Body and Blood as present in the Eucharist, we do not mean the Body and Blood *only*. We are taught that the *whole Jesus Christ*—God and Man—is present. Hence, Communion under one kind does not differ from that given or received under both kinds, except in the *manner* of giving and receiving It. There can be no difference in the *Thing received*, since no one could receive more of Christ than Christ whole and entire.

4. If *either* the Body *or* the Blood be present, it follows—*i.e.*, since the time of Christ's Resurrection—that *both* are always present together. The Christ received must be the *actual* glorified Christ as He is now in Heaven—*i.e.*, having all the elements of His personality—His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—inseparably united together. This is obvious. The words of consecration, as we have seen, practically effect that which they announce. The sentence, 'This is My Body,' spoken in Mass, causes our Lord's *Body* to be present—that is to say, His Body under Its present conditions, and containing in Its veins the Precious Blood. Moreover, that Body is alive, and actually animated by Christ's human *Soul*. And the whole human composition is, as it ever has been since the Word took flesh from Mary—

Laity
not 'de-
frauded.'

Meaning
of 'con-
comi-
tance.'

inseparably united to the Divine Person—God the Son. Hence we cannot have any one of the aforesaid component parts of our Lord, to use a clumsy term, without having all the others, and hence the whole Christ, true God and true Man.

Theologians, however, discriminate between the *reason* for the Body and Blood becoming present under their respective ‘species,’ and that for the inseparable attendance upon the latter of the other elements in Christ—His Soul and Divinity. They explain that the Body and Blood are made present *by the force of the words* instituted by Christ and pronounced at Mass over the bread and wine respectively. For in those words the Body and Blood are expressly mentioned. But the Soul and Divinity of Christ, though not expressed, become present also by necessary consequence, or natural accompaniment—‘by concomitance,’ to use the technical phrase. Thus it is quite common for Catholics to speak of Holy Communion comprehensively as ‘receiving our Lord’—a popular but faithful summing-up of theology.

How ‘in’
the Host,

5. What is meant exactly by saying that our Lord is ‘in’ the Blessed Sacrament? In what sense is He located there?

To confine ourselves, for convenience, to the form of bread, Christ exists as the God-Man within the limits of the circular Sacred Host. But this must be rightly understood. As regards His *Divinity*, He of course exists equally *beyond* those limits and everywhere. But, as far as this

earth is concerned, His Sacred Humanity exists only within the sacramental limits, in every consecrated Host throughout the world, and in every part of the same.

Wherever the Blessed Sacrament is, there is He, our God Incarnate, whole and entire, and this by means of a marvellous multiplication of *presences* (or relations to space), but clearly *not* by a multiplication of *Christs*, there being but One.

We need not stop to compare these multiplied sacramental presences, or multilocations, with the 'bilocations' recorded in the lives of saints, nor seek to determine whether the two supernatural phenomena belong essentially to the same class. One difference at least is evident—that in the case of 'bilocation' the usual form and figure of the Saint was perceptible. In the Eucharist we do not see the adorable Humanity of our Lord. That is a joy to come, please God. At all events, we learn from revelation the truth that such presence of material bodies in different places at one and the same time involves no contradiction—that it is not impossible, given a Power competent to effect a marvel such as we have had no personal experience of in ordinary life.

But, although Christ is located in the Blessed Sacrament, His Sacred Body is not commensurable with the consecrated elements. Thus, we cannot say that one portion of it is in one part of the Host and another in another part, any

more than we say of our human soul that a *portion* of it is in our head and another in our feet.

Our
limited
know-
ledge.

It defies our comprehension how the true and substantial body of a man can be contained within the dimensions of the Sacred Host, and, moreover, without outward extension of parts in space. 'But,' as an able writer points out, 'this difficulty . . . is based on the vain conviction that we are acquainted with the laws of space, and that what commonly happens in the course of nature must necessarily be always true, even when God is pleased to act miraculously. There is no ground for this conviction, as they who are most conversant with the subject are most thoroughly assured. It is common to meet with a multiplying mirror, where a man may see the perfect image of himself twenty times over in the space of a few inches. When a blind man is assured by his companion that he was thus multiplied and diminished, he would be rash and wrong if he disbelieved the words spoken to him; but the man born blind is not more ignorant of light than are the acutest reasoners on earth ignorant of the true nature of space.'¹

Christ
not
divided

The Sacred Body of Christ is not divided when the elements are divided, but the *whole Christ* is as truly present in each portion or fragment as in

¹ 'Outlines of Dogmatic Theology,' by S. J. Hunter, S.J., a work in three volumes, much to be recommended to those who are looking for a masterly and lucid summary of Catholic theology couched in popular form.

the original undivided whole : hence the reverent care required of the celebrant at Mass in collecting and consuming the smallest crumbs of the Sacred Host which may chance to remain upon the 'corporal' or 'paten.' The marvel here referred to does not, however, appear to differ essentially from that of our Lord's simultaneous presence in all the Sacred Hosts scattered throughout the world. To draw a *practical conclusion*, no Catholic has the least cause to be shocked or dismayed if, in an emergency, when the consecrated particles in the ciborium happen to have run short, the priest should be seen to divide a few of these particles (or small hosts) into very small portions, administering one fragment to each of the remaining communicants lest they lose their Communion. Each receives the whole Christ.

Now to bring our summary to a close. It is scarcely necessary to point out to Catholics the futility of seeking to fathom, with the plumb-line of finite reason, that abyss of Divine mystery which the Holy Eucharist opens up to us. It defies human measurement and investigation. The faithful Catholic simply adores with lowly and submissive faith this lasting monument of Divine love and condescension. So sings the theological poet of the Eucharist *par excellence*, Aquinas, the chief ornament of the holy Order of St. Dominic :¹

Faith and
adoration.

¹ In his 'Lauda Sion,' the Angelic Doctor of the Schools combines devoutest poetic expression with the greatest theo-

'Thee prostrate I adore, the Deity that lies
 Beneath those humble veils, concealed from human eyes ;
 My heart doth wholly yield subjected to Thy sway,
 For contemplating Thee it wholly faints away.'¹

The non-
 Catholic
 mind.

The Divine marvels of the Real Presence, as taught by the Catholic Church, too often prove a stumbling-block to non-Catholic inquirers. History repeats itself: 'This is a hard saying, and who can hear it?'² But why should it be so to any sincere believer in Christianity, who accepts on faith the mystery of the Blessed Trinity? A convert from Anglicanism was once asked by a friend and former co-religionist: 'Now that you are a Roman Catholic, tell me which doctrines do you find the hardest to accept? For instance, which presents the greater difficulty, the doctrine of Transubstantiation or that of the Trinity?' The convert replied to this effect: 'I find no more difficulty in the one than in the other; or, rather, both are equally easy to believe, both rest upon one and the same Divine authority. Both are taught by a Church which I firmly believe to have been made infallible by Christ.'

God can.

We may usefully try to enter a little more deeply into the non-Catholic mind. Without this we shall be powerless to help others towards the truth. Perhaps the difficulty of belief in the Blessed Eucharist lies more in the *moral* wonder it

logical precision. No better exposition of Eucharistic theology is anywhere to be found.

¹ Translated by J. D. Aylward.

² St. John vi. 61.

involves than in the physical. For the latter merely postulates a Divine *power* which is able to work its will with those material substances and forces which Itself has created. This need present no great obstacle to a person who believes in the Christian's God, especially if he accept the Gospels, with their accounts of the miracles wrought at Cana, on the Sea of Galilee, and upon the loaves and fishes.

But what may at the first blush fairly stagger the earnest searcher after truth is the thought of the *relations* set up by Catholic Eucharistic teaching and practices between lowly, sinful creatures and that great All-Holy God, in whose sight they are but dust. 'Is it credible,' the bewildered non-Catholic may exclaim, 'that the infinite, inaccessible Majesty of God should consent to be dealt with on terms of so great a familiarity—however tempered by reverence—such as the ubiquitous Tabernacle, Holy Communion, Benediction and Processions of the Blessed Sacrament, daily access to the Real Presence in private visits to the church, and the rest imply? It is too astounding to be true—not because God *could* not have so decreed, but because He would never allow such freedom of intercourse.'

And yet one has only to read the story of our Lord's life on earth—to ponder, above all, the details of His Passion and death—in order to realize the awful completeness with which our Saviour has, in fact, been willing to deliver Himself 'into the hands of sinful men' for the sake

But would
He?

Analogies
of Chris-
tianity.

of their salvation and sanctification. Is it *more* astounding that the Son of God should permit His true Body and Blood to rest awhile upon our tongues and in our bodies, than that He should have borne to be spat upon and reviled and scourged and crowned in mockery by the Jewish mob and brutal soldiery of Pilate? If He suffered these revilers to approach Him with feigned obeisances and scoffing acclamations, and to strike His sacred, thorn-crowned Head, is it too incredible that He should allow us to approach Him in faith, adoration, and prayer at the foot of the Tabernacle of His Presence? If the servants and soldiers might drag Him about with violence and insult from tribunal to tribunal, is His mystic helplessness and self-imposed dependence upon us in the Blessed Sacrament impossible to conceive?

He went to the cruel, shameful pillar, and to the torments of Calvary at the bidding of a cowardly pagan judge. Is it so impossible He should hasten to place Himself beneath the elements of bread and wine at the will of His appointed priest, who rehearses with awe and reverence His own words at His own command: 'Do ye this for a memory of Me'?

The main
question :
the Incar-
nation.

True, the history of the Blessed Eucharist in the Catholic Church is not uniformly a record of reverence and love. It has pages horribly stained with sacrilege and blasphemy. Yet if Christ's insatiable love for men caused Him to endure outrage, sacrilege, and judicial murder in the hour of His Passion, is His heroic love likely to be less

enduring in the *memorial* of that Passion which He established permanently in our midst on the night of His betrayal? No. The difficulty, if difficulty there be, lies deeper down in the very foundations of the Christian Faith—in the mystery of the Incarnation—the corner-stone of Christianity. For it was by making Himself ‘our brother and our flesh,’ by assuming ‘the form of a servant’ that the Son of God, as it were, abolished in His own Person the distance separating man from the unapproachable dignity of God, and set the example of free intercourse between the two infinite extremes. Once we realize this as an accomplished fact of Divine condescension, we should expect to find manifestations of this same gracious attribute of God Incarnate constantly reappearing in the details of the Christian system by Him established. After seeing Infinite Power and Wisdom assume for love of us, and with unselfish disregard for Divine dignity, the condition of a weak and senseless Babe, it ought scarcely to be much of a surprise to us when we find it lurking fondly, as a lover behind the lattice, beneath the lowly appearances of a little food. If this lower depth of self-abasement for our sakes appears to us rather different, the difference is, after all, not essential, but one only of degree—one for which the other *antecedently* incredible lengths of self-sacrifice and love on the part of God have already sufficiently prepared us.

No. XI.

MATTER, FORM, AND MINISTER OF THE
SACRAMENT.

MUCH might be written about the *matter* and the *form* which combine to make up this august Sacrament. But most of it would be irrelevant in Letters of the present kind, either because it chiefly concerns priests—for whose instruction I do not pretend to write—or else because it has little practical bearing upon Catholic life and conduct. I therefore confine myself to the following points :

A special-
ity of the
Euchar-
ist.

Unique Character of the Blessed Sacrament.—Allusion has just been made to the *matter* and *form* of the Eucharist. These are, so to say, the component parts which make up the Sacrament. But there is one respect in which the Blessed Eucharist stands alone among the Seven Sacraments. It exists independently of Its administration to individual souls. Not so with the other Sacraments. These come into being—are made—in the process of administration. Take Baptism. The proximate *matter* is *water as used by the priest*; the *form* consists of the words, ‘I baptize thee,’ etc. These two elements are put together only in the act of baptizing. But the Blessed Sacrament is made during Mass—of which It might be called the

product—and remains complete, even though no one, not even the celebrant, were to receive It.

It is constantly reserved, as all Catholics know, in our tabernacles. I am here supposing the celebrant of the Mass to consecrate one or more Hosts or Particles besides the one large Host used for the Mass. But even if he only consecrates the latter, the Blessed Sacrament is formed, and remains in being upon the altar until the priest has given himself Communion with It towards the close of Mass.

MATTER AND FORM.

I. The *remote* matter of the Eucharist necessary for *valid* consecration is (a) *wheaten bread*. It is still *valid* if *leavened*, like our ordinary bread—that is to say, the fact of its being leavened will not prevent *true consecration*. But ecclesiastical law forbids priests of the *Latin*, or Western, portion of the Catholic Church to use any but unleavened bread. There are other rites besides the Latin within the pale of the Catholic Church, having fullest sanction from the Holy See, which *lawfully*, as well as *validly*, employ *leavened* bread, in accordance with immemorial custom. We may here take note of the large-mindedness of Rome, which, while rigidly insisting upon *doctrinal* unity, leaves much latitude in matters of discipline, and respects ancient customs obtaining in different parts of her spiritual kingdom. The deposit of doctrine delivered by Christ to the Apostles and handed down by the latter to their ecclesiastical representatives

Matter :
the bread.

is a sacred trust *to be preserved intact*, and not to be disposed of by the Church at will, while *disciplinary laws* are of the Church's own framing, and hence within her power to modify or unmake, according to the needs of time and place.¹

Autho-
rized
differ-
ences of
rite.

These diversities of ritual are not due to local or personal private judgment, nor are they the outcome of lawless obstinacy in the same. Some of them are traceable to Apostolic ordinance, while others have either been decreed in course of time *by lawful ecclesiastical authority*, or, at all events, tacitly sanctioned by the same with the fullest knowledge. Thus the Supreme Headship claimed by the Pope over all Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Church does not tyrannically override the legislative authority of the latter within the spheres of their respective jurisdictions.

The wine.

(b) The *remote* matter necessary for *valid* consecration is *wine from the grape*, which must be so far free from adulteration or dilution as to be truly called wine in human estimation. This is not always the same thing as being advertised or labelled as 'pure wine.' Hence, laity who have to provide Mass-wine for their private oratories

¹ I pass by the question as to how far the Church, in the persons of the Apostles, had the *essentials of sacramental rites* prescribed to her in detail by our Lord Himself. In so far as rites may have been definitely fixed by Him they would be a *Divine*, and not ecclesiastical ordinance, and hence would admit of no local variations. The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist would be cases in point—*i.e.*, as regards their essential form, not necessarily as regards their additional ceremonies.

should take pains to secure a brand attested by *ecclesiastical* authority. Not every wine found on the dinner-table is safe for Mass purposes !

With regard to freedom from *dilution*, it will be noticed that, at the Offertory of the Mass, a few minims of water are added by the priest to the wine destined for consecration. This is a very ancient ceremony, commonly traced to Apostolic times, and, as the prayer accompanying it shows, one of deep symbolic meaning. But the quantity of water added is too small to deprive the wine of its character as such and render it incapable of consecration.

It may not be amiss to call attention to this question of *dilution*. Boys will be thoughtless boys, even when allowed the nowadays too lightly valued privilege of serving at the Holy Sacrifice. A thirsty and unscrupulous server *might* secretly abstract wine from the wine-bottle, or from the cruet, and, to conceal the theft, fill up with water to the same amount. *This is a very serious matter*, quite apart from the theft ; for by mixing water in any notable quantity the priest's consecration may be rendered invalid, and the Sacrifice of our Lord destroyed. Needless to say, this would be a very great sacrilege.

Moreover, the dishonest practice referred to would lead to *idolatry* on the part of the congregation, who, at the *elevation* of the chalice, would in fact be worshipping a mixture of wine and water instead of the Precious Blood, as they imagine.

The
'mixed
chalice.

A serious
fault

For
sacristans.

This by no means fanciful danger suggests to sacristans—who, as responsible persons, will be above offending in this matter—the need of keeping Mass-wine in safety, and, to those who procure it from a general wine and spirit cellar, the expediency of tapping the right barrel or taking from the right bin!

2. The *proximate* matter of the Eucharist is either the species, or outward appearances, of bread and wine, still left after the transubstantiating words of consecration have been pronounced, or else the *use of the bread and wine by the priest* in the act of consecrating them. Catholic theology is not of one mind on this somewhat subtle point, which, however, has no *practical* importance of any sort.

(c) The *form* of the Sacrament certainly consists of the words derived from Christ, referring to either kind, viz., 'This is My Body,' and 'This is the Chalice of My Blood.' These words of Divine power are uttered by the priest secretly, though distinctly, while bowed down over the altar, and just before adoring and then elevating the Sacred Host or the Sacred Chalice.

In order that the Sacrament may be validly made, it must be made during the rite called Mass.¹ Thus, for example, if Holy Communion

¹ For this reason, amongst others, we need not harrow our minds overmuch with certain ancient and horrible fables of apostate priests maliciously and sacrilegiously consecrating innumerable loaves while walking past bakers' shops or sitting at table with their boon-companions.

(as Viaticum) has to be given to a dying Catholic unexpectedly, and no reserved consecrated Host can be had, Mass has to be celebrated for providing the Blessed Sacrament—supposing this to be possible and lawful in the actual circumstances.

According to Article of Religion No. 28 of the Church of England, ‘the Lord’s Supper was not by Christ’s ordinance *reserved*,’ etc. Hence the Anglican minister who cannot contrive to ‘reserve’ his Eucharist celebrates by the sick person’s bedside the whole Communion Service prescribed in his Book of Common Prayer, that service being the Anglican makeshift for the Catholic Mass. The *form* of the Sacrament consists of the *words of consecration*, taken from the New Testament, and pronounced by the priest over the bread and wine respectively.

THE MINISTER.

A time-honoured Catholic term, though now more commonly used by us to distinguish a non-Catholic clergyman from our priests. Here it refers to him who is to act as our Lord’s instrument for transubstantiating the bread and wine in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The priest is said to ‘offer Mass,’ and this, of course, is true. According to Christ’s decree, he is necessary for the performance of the sacrificial rite. But he is not the *chief* offerer—Who is our great High Priest, Jesus Christ Himself—the same who is also the Victim offered, being present under the appear-

ances of material elements. The priest is, therefore, truly called a *minister*—i.e., a servant or assistant of the High Priest. Thus, under the Old Law in the time of Moses, Aaron, a type of Christ, was the High Priest of Israel, but was assisted in the sacrificial office by other priests. The power to consecrate the bread and wine in Holy Mass is confined to validly ordained *priests*—under which term Bishops are, of course, pre-eminently included. A *deacon*, for example, has no power to consecrate, though, given adequate need, he may be *deputed* simply to *distribute* Holy Communion. When Christ at the Last Supper bade the twelve do what He had done, in His memory, He there and then elevated them to the priesthood, as the Council of Trent has defined.

Valid priest's Orders are necessary for *valid* consecration. Orthodoxy in faith and purity of morals are not, however imperatively called for in those who handle the holy things of God.¹ About the awful sacrilege of celebrating 'unworthily'—i.e., in a state of grievous sin—nothing need here be said. This affects the *lawfulness* of saying Mass, not its *validity*, nor its priceless value to those assisting at it.

¹ Pope Leo XIII., in his famous Bull of September 13, 1896, did not declare Anglican Ordinations invalid because of the unorthodoxy of Anglican Bishops and candidates, but owing to the inherent defects of the *ordinations themselves*—in form and in intention.

No. XII.

THE PRECEPT OF COMMUNION AND THE COMMUNICANT.

THESE are subjects that most concern my Catholic readers. All of us are bound to be communicants—under conditions to be reviewed presently.

PRECEPT OF COMMUNION.

Our Lord commands us to receive His Body and Blood: ‘Except ye eat of the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, *ye shall not have life in you.*’ And again: ‘He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood *hath everlasting life*, and I will raise him up at the last day.’¹ The Catholic Church—to which Christ guaranteed infallibility in teaching—has always interpreted these words as conveying a strict and weighty *command*. I say ‘interpreted,’ because the words of Christ do not read so much like a formal command, but rather give us *warning* as to the fatal consequences of *not* eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood. Yet, in truth, they do contain a command. For, since we are all bound to procure ‘eternal life’ in Heaven after death—that being the end for which God made us—we must be equally bound to do that which our Lord

¹ St. John vi.

declares will secure it. 'He that eateth . . . hath eternal life.' Again, to secure the end of eternal happiness and glory, we need to live the life of grace and righteousness here below. But our Lord declares that 'except we eat' we shall *not* have life in us. The life of grace will be starved out of us unless nourished by this 'living Bread that came down from Heaven'; 'and this Bread,' He says, 'is My Flesh, for the life of the world.' By receiving Him, a man 'abideth in Me and I in him.'

Necessity
of a
teaching
Church.

There are other points which our Saviour's words do not definitely settle, which He left to His Church to clear up for us. The Bible text, unless supplemented by some authoritative gloss, leaves us in doubt, for instance, as to the *degree* in which Holy Communion is necessary for maintaining us in grace and for securing Heaven to us. Christ also made Baptism a condition for entering the Kingdom of God.¹ Is Communion *equally indispensable*? No. Just as we learn from the traditional teaching of the Church (and not from the Bible) that, contrary to Anabaptist views, infants are included under the word 'man,' in Christ's answer to Nicodemus, and that consequently they can never see God without Baptism, so, too, we know from the practice of the Church that baptized children are *not* strictly included in the precept of Communion, and get to Heaven without it, if overtaken by death. Again, from the Church (not from the Bible) we learn that no one, whether infant or adult, forfeits Heaven

¹ St. John iii. 5.

by the mere fact of never having received the Eucharist, unless the omission be *wilful* and unrepented of before death. In a word, while Baptism (either in fact or in desire) is *under all circumstances* and *for everyone* an indispensable condition for salvation, the reception of our Lord's Holy Body and Blood is only necessary because our Lord seriously commands it; and conscious violation of a grave duty always deprives us of God's love and of Heaven—*i.e.*, till we repent and, if time allow, supply the defect.

Further, from the Church (and not the Bible) ^{Bible alone not sufficient.} we gather *how often* Communion must be received in order to substantially satisfy our Lord's precept. The *strict obligation* is limited to once a year—about Easter-time—as I explained in Series I. of these Letters, under 'Precepts of the Church.' It must also be received (if possible) as 'Viaticum,' or 'food for the journey,' when we are in danger of death by sickness; and, according to a decree of Propaganda,¹ Viaticum is also to be given to condemned criminals on the eve, or on the day, of their execution.

N.B.—Let any of our Protestant Bible-Christians who chance to light upon this page notice how many practical points of grave importance for the Christian life the Bible leaves unexplained, and let them draw the conclusion that an infallible Church—commissioned by Christ to fill up the gaps—is a real necessity for our guidance to Heaven.

¹ July 5, 1841.

Obsolete
infant
Com-
munion.

Concerning infant Communion I need only say that—as a matter of *discipline*, not of *dogmatic principle*—the early Christian Church communicated these innocents just after Baptism without awaiting the dawn of reason. This discipline was abandoned in the West, apparently for reverential reasons, about the end of the eighth century, though it is still retained in the East.

THE COMMUNICANT.

Who may
com-
municate?

Who may receive Holy Communion? 1. According to the present discipline of the Church, all those who are so far confirmed in the use of reason as to be able to distinguish this Heavenly Food from ordinary bodily nourishment. This amount of appreciation of the thing received forms, absolutely speaking, the sufficient *minimum* required in every communicant. But clearly this does not mean that Holy Communion must be received as soon as ever the said *minimum* of appreciation is judged to have been reached. Yet experience shows that children often get far beyond the said degree of spiritual perception some years before they are actually admitted to their First Communion. Most priests will meet with not a few instances of the kind. Hence it would seem that, at times, a good deal of superfluous fuss is made over allowing individual children to receive our Lord for the first time—a state of mind that appears to overlook theological teaching as to the inherent efficacy of Sacraments,

and the principle that the Sacraments are instituted for the benefit of mankind.

The Council of Trent has defined that Sacraments produce their effect *ex opere operato*, which means that the grace-giving power of a Sacrament is not to be attributed to the personal dispositions of the receiver as to its cause, but to the inherent power of the rite infused into it by Jesus Christ. Certain very elementary personal dispositions are needed as *conditions* for rendering the soul capable of the sacramental operation, and also—in proportion to their perfection—to enable the Sacrament to work in the soul *more abundantly*. But the part played by subjective dispositions is simply that of *removing obstacles* to the working of the Sacrament, according to its particular character and purpose, or of facilitating its *fuller* effect.

To use an illustration. The Scripture speaks of drawing water in gladness from the fountains of the Saviour. The Seven Sacraments are like so many ducts conveying to our souls the Precious Blood from Its Source—our Saviour. The saving stream of Its own intrinsic virtue cannot fail to pour into the vessels of our souls unless we close these up. The dispositions required for each Sacrament uncover our spiritual vessels, and so remove the obstacle, but are not the cause of efficacy. Similarly, the more perfect our dispositions, the larger is the aperture presented, and the more abundant the flow of grace.

In the case of the Blessed Eucharist, the *only* subjective disposition demanded of the communi-

A forgotten truth.

Illustration.

cant—for removing obstacles to Its sanctifying operation—is *freedom from conscious mortal sin*. This follows from the character of the Sacrament, which belongs to the class called ‘Sacraments of the living,’ or Sacraments to be administered to those only who are already spiritually living—*i.e.*, in possession of the grace and friendship of God—and intended to *increase* grace, not to restore it after being lost by sin. Hence, to benefit by the Blessed Eucharist, the recipient must be previously in a state of grace and free from *mortal sin*. Now, to return to the children. This state of innocence is clearly not difficult to secure in the young, and will be the more easily secured the younger they are. Grace, then, is the ‘wedding garment,’ and the *only* one which our Lord exacts in the case of those who present themselves at His Eucharistic Feast.¹

But rigorism—often an unsuspected relic of a pestilential Jansenism—has multiplied the Communion *trousseaux*, and added to the list a strait-jacket of ‘steadiness’ and all manner of perfections not to be expected in young children, and the absence of which—unless first principles of sacramental theology be false—cannot prevent their deriving invaluable help from the reception of our Lord for overcoming those very faults which are so often made the reasons for delaying First Communion. It is said: ‘Mary’—a girl

¹ We are not *here* speaking of *Daily Communion*; of that much will be said later.

perhaps of eleven, twelve, or thirteen years of age—‘is too giddy to make her First Communion for a year or two.’ Now, there is giddiness and giddiness. If it be of a kind that argues a doubtful intellectual realization of what Holy Communion means, then, of course, this plea for delay is sound. For, under normal circumstances, it is not good to be satisfied with a child’s being *merely* able to distinguish between Holy Communion and ordinary bodily food. But, except in the case of an unusually backward child, or one whose religious instruction has been neglected by those responsible for it, giddiness of this sort is not likely to exist at such an age as we are here supposing. The giddiness complained of probably has no reference to the child’s *understanding* of Holy Communion, but to faults of character, or venial sins in which there is weakness but no trace of malice. The child is peevish, forgets her prayers, disobeys the governess, has fibbed on several occasions, is somewhat of a ‘tom-boy,’ and the like. And, by way of helping her to mend, she is to be debarred from the chief *means* of amendment, the potent graces of Holy Communion! When will pious people realize—I mean in *practice*, not only in theory—that Holy Communion is *not* a luxury reserved to those whose greater piety makes It, so to say, suitable to their state of spiritual life; that, on the contrary, It *is* the ‘daily Bread’ designed by the loving Heart for *all* His children—especially for the more spiritually needy—that It is a medicine

for their spiritual ailments, a Divine tonic for bracing them up in God's service?

But more will be said on this point later, in connexion with Frequent Communion. I would call attention, however, to what was said in my First Series of Letters as to the proper persons for judging of the fitness of people for Sacraments. Parents, or other non-sacerdotal trainers of the young, are not the final judges in this matter. That office has been committed by Christ to His priests. They are, as St. Paul tells us, 'the dispensers of the mysteries of God,' and hence are responsible for dispensing to fit persons. Except this be kept in view, we might have the curious comedy of some parent, who 'would not *dream* of allowing Johnnie to make his First Communion while he is so troublesome' (though Johnnie might, perhaps, easily give that parent 'points' in a Catechism contest), not scrupling as to the fitness of communicating after taking daughters to a doubtful play the night before, or after devouring a suggestive French novel on the eve of a Communion morning by the light of a bedside lamp!

The
mentally
deficient.

2. *Lunatics*, while out of their minds, may not have Communion administered to them. It belongs to the priest to judge prudently whether Communion be advisable, and safe from irreverent treatment, during lucid intervals. The same discretion is needed in the case of the half-witted and aged people in extreme dotage. Each case must be considered on its own merits. But as a safe-

guard to over-strict views on the point, it should be remembered that so saintly and leading a theologian as Thomas Sanchez (1550-1610), not to mention others, holds that both of the last-named classes may have Holy Communion when they wish for It. Regarding adults whose mental development does not exceed that of young children—*e.g.*, some specimens of negroes—De Lugo, whose opinions in moral, even if unsupported, St. Alphonsus Liguori held to be of themselves trustworthy, maintains that Communion should be given them, if not every Easter, at all events at the hour of death, always supposing their ability to distinguish the Blessed Sacrament from ordinary food. *Deaf-mutes* must be judged according to signs of discretion that can be elicited from them.

3. The august dignity of this Holy Sacrament Invalids. obviously requires that all probably foreseen risk of irreverence in Its reception should be avoided. Thus, where *illness* is attended by *vomiting* on taking food, prudent care becomes obligatory, the doctor being presumably the best judge as to how long this symptom must have ceased in order to render a return of the same, through receiving the Sacred Host, unlikely. *Ordinary* care, not exquisite precaution, is here needed.

To allay groundless scruples and distressing Fidgets. worry, it may be useful to add, in this connexion, that communicants suffering from *bad coughs* will rarely on this account be in danger of irreverence

in receiving. Of course, while a coughing fit is actually in progress it will be impossible to receive at the moment without risk of irreverence; a case is also conceivable in which a fit of coughing may induce the more distressing symptoms referred to in the preceding paragraph. But there is no cause for anxiety *after* swallowing the Sacred Host, since the breathing-tubes affected by the cough are perfectly distinct from the food-duct or *œsophagus*. So there is no need for people to choke themselves with violent repression of a cough during their thanksgiving after Holy Communion; but—to be unavoidably explicit—spitting is to be avoided, in view of some small portion of the Sacred Host that may not as yet have been swallowed.

False
scandal.

The above points are intended to provide against irreverences which can be foreseen. But there are accidents which cannot. With reference to these, I may repeat an observation made elsewhere, that no irreverence is done when none is intended. Our Lord, with His perfect knowledge of mankind, in trusting so sacred a treasure to the hands of us awkward mortals, was fully aware that even care would not always prevent mishaps. And except *ordinary* care be wanting, no offence will be committed against Him. Some hints, however, will be given presently concerning the manner of receiving the Blessed Sacrament such as will reduce accidents on the communicant's side to a *minimum*.

No. XIII.

USE OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST—I.

IN Holy Communion we receive in very truth Jesus Christ, God and man. That we need to prepare for His coming goes without saying. The problem, when we realize Who and What He is, seems rather, How could we ever prepare enough? If we regarded only the impassable abyss that naturally separates the creature from the Infinite Majesty and Holiness of God, then we should have to allow that not the sinless Mother Herself could ever in the strict sense be *worthy* to receive Him. This of itself proves that the preparation required by God of us sin-stained mortals must be regulated according to our human possibilities, and not according to His deserts. Had this higher standard been appointed to us, then our Lord's Institution of the Holy Sacrament would have been futile.

Coming down, then, to what is humanly feasible, what are the essential and desirable dispositions demanded of us when receiving the Divine Guest into our lowly abodes?

A Sacrament is destined for the benefit of that part of our human composition which is spiritual—our souls. But we, the receivers, are not exclusively spiritual beings. As human creatures

Reception
to be
human.

we have a material, visible element in us—our body with its senses. Hence our preparation for receiving the Divine Guest in Holy Communion, in order to be suited to our human condition, must embrace *both* elements of our composition, or it will not be *human*. This recalls a principle already dwelt on under the First Commandment¹—viz., that our human worship of God generally must bring the body into play as well as the soul. Thus our present subject naturally divides itself into two—A. Preparation of *Soul*; B. Preparation of *Body*. Let us start with the more important.

A. PREPARATION OF SOUL FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

The question to be answered is this: What are the *dispositions* required for receiving our Divine Lord in the Blessed Eucharist? Here again we must discriminate between (1) *Essential Dispositions*, those *without* which a Communion would be bad and unworthy—sacrilegious, in fact, and *with* which *no one can possibly receive unworthily*, nor without fruit and benefit; (2) *Desirable Dispositions*, those which anyone who realizes What he is receiving must see at once to be most becoming.

1. *Essential Spiritual Preparation.*

State of
grace

The only preparation strictly and indispensably demanded is *possession of the state of grace—i.e.,*

¹ First Series of Letters, pp. 14, 15.

freedom from *conscious* mortal sin which has not been confessed with sorrow and purpose of amendment.¹ The 'state of grace,' or friendship with God, is needed for Holy Communion, because the Blessed Eucharist is one of the Sacraments 'of the living,' like Confirmation, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. It is designed, not for reconciling a sinner to God, not for placing the soul in grace, but for *increasing* the life of grace *already existing*. Those who receive It must already be spiritually 'alive.' A person in *mortal* sin is spiritually dead—his soul is, so to say, a loathsome spiritual corpse. The Body and Blood of Christ are the *food* of the Christian soul; and we do not give food to the dead, but to those who are living, for nourishing the life they already possess.

St. Paul teaches that 'whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.'² But *let a man prove himself*, and so let

St. Paul
and the
Council
of Trent.

¹ 'Not confessed'—that is to say, *knowingly* not confessed. For a person may have left out a mortal sin in his confession through *forgetfulness*; but if he was sorry for *all* mortal sins, the absolution covered the omitted sin as well, and he is in the state of grace and fit to communicate, even though he remember the omission before actually communicating. But, of course, he must repair his forgetfulness in his next confession. For every remembered *mortal* sin must—by Divine precept—be submitted to a confessor for absolution, as a condition for reconciliation with God.

² I Cor. xi. 27. The Authorized Anglican Version is unfaithful here, putting '*and* drink the chalice' instead of '*or* drink,' as the Greek text has it—a corruption of vital im-

him eat,' etc. What is the *nature* and *extent* of this self-testing commanded by the Apostle as a condition for avoiding such awful blood-guiltiness? The Council of Trent¹ gives us the authoritative answer: 'Assuredly, in proportion as a Christian man realizes the sacred and Divine character of this heavenly Sacrament, he ought the more diligently to beware of approaching Its reception without great reverence and holiness—the more so as we read in the Apostle those words full of awe: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord." Hence the communicant must call to mind the command: "But let a man prove himself."' Now, what is the exact measure of 'reverence and holiness,' and of self-probation required by the Council? 'Ecclesiastical custom,' it continues, 'declares this probation to be necessary in the sense that no one who is conscious to himself of *mortal* sin may approach Holy Communion without previously making sacramental confession, however repentant he may deem himself.'

Here, then, we have the Church of Christ's standard of *necessary* and absolutely *sufficient* self-probation for receiving worthily the Body and Blood of the Lord. This is her authoritative

portance to the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ under *either* kind. But this is corrected in the Revised Version.

¹ Session xiii., chap. 7.

explanation of a Biblical text ; and it is forbidden to Catholics to interpret the Written Word in any sense contrary to hers. For to her—His mystic Bride—Christ has promised the ‘ Spirit of Truth ’ for teaching us infallibly.

Given, then, the state of grace, as just explained, it is a simple impossibility for a person to make an ‘ unworthy ’ Communion, in the Pauline sense. Moreover, it follows that if our Lord be received worthily, the reception of the Author of Grace must inevitably be *fruitful* also. Thus the distinction drawn in some carelessly-written spiritual books between a substantially worthy and a *fruitful* reception is both illogical and untheological. Holy Communion received in grace must, of its own innate efficacy as a Sacrament of Christ, produce its effect, or fruit, which is an increase of the spiritual life of grace.

We have already noted more than once, but not once too often, that Sacraments work in our souls *ex opere operato*—that is to say, of their inherent virtue and force, as instruments ordained by Christ—unless a positive obstacle be interposed. And in the case of the Holy Eucharist, only the complete absence of supernatural life, through grievous sin, can hinder that life being increased and strengthened. For that which is designed for food cannot benefit the dead. The *substantial* efficacy, therefore, of Sacraments in no way depends on the personal religious activity of the receiver at the time of reception, any more than upon the worthiness of the ministering

Com-
munion,
when
'worthy?'

How
Sacra-
ments
work.

priest. Such personal effort is, indeed, needed accidentally for removing obstacles, if obstacles happen to exist—*e.g.*, for making a good confession when mortal sin has been committed. But such a 'work of the worker' (*opus operantis*) does not positively contribute, as a *cause*, to the efficacy of the Holy Eucharist received afterwards.¹

Illustration.

Thus, the removal of such obstacles as brick-bats and old iron, though a necessary preliminary for tilling a piece of ground, does not give to the plough its force and efficacy. If, however, besides such negative preparations, the ground be moist and not hard, the effect of the ploughman's toil will be proportionately greater. So, too, possession of the state of grace is needed as a preliminary condition, in order that the Blessed Eucharist may *increase* that grace in the soil of our heart. And, if other still more perfect dispositions be superadded, grace will be augmented in yet fuller measure. But it remains absolutely true that freedom from conscious mortal sin (in the sense explained) *suffices* for a substantially worthy and fruitful Communion. Such a Communion cannot help being good, though it might be much *better*.

'I don't feel pious enough.'

We have herein contained the answer to a common objection: 'It would be wrong for me to go to Communion oftener than once a month, or once a fortnight, because *I don't feel piously inclined*,' or, again, 'because, in my position, honestly speaking, I can only manage to secure

See No. II., pp. 15, 16, examples.

five or ten minutes to prepare, and only as much for my thanksgiving. So, once a year, or once every quarter, is the most I can venture on.'

Let us convince ourselves that the great Sacraments of Christ are not dependent upon our pious feelings, and that neither were they instituted chiefly for the benefit and use of the independent and leisured classes. It is just those who are most dependent upon others, and who are least masters of their own time, whose surroundings often place them in greater need of the 'Divine Medicine'¹ and Preservative of the Holy Eucharist—young people living in un-Christian homes, or forced to work in irreligious or immoral surroundings, convert servants in bigoted households, Catholic governesses or nurses in Protestant institutions, and the like.

Attention has already been called to the fact that if the state of grace has been forfeited by *mortal* sin it must be regained, before communicating, *by going first to Confession* and receiving absolution in the dispositions required for the Sacrament of Penance.

Cases of doubt may nevertheless occur. Let us suppose the case of one who, through forgetfulness or some other *unintentional* cause, omits a mortal sin in his Confession. And, under this supposition, we will consider two possible alternatives: (a) That, *unaware* of his omission, he goes to Holy Communion; or (b) that he *remembers* the omission

A mortal
sin for-
gotten.

¹ 'Divinum Pharmacum' (Decree of the Holy See on Daily Communion, December 20, 1905).

before his Communion. How far has he fulfilled that law of self-probation by his incomplete confession?

In *either* case he has substantially 'proved himself' by the Confession. Weighty theologians say that the person in alternative (b), who *remembers* the unintentional omission, is not strictly bound to go back to the confessional (even if he have full opportunity), though, of course, he must mention the omitted mortal sin in his next Confession. And in alternative (a) it is still more clear that he makes a worthy Communion.

Reason
for above.

These solutions depend upon another truth concerning the Sacrament of Penance: that as long as a mortal sin is not *culpably or wilfully* omitted, the absolution remits the guilt of that sin as well as of those actually confessed, since it is virtually included in the *universal* sorrow and purpose of amendment elicited. But the separate Divine law of submitting each known mortal sin committed in life to the priest for absolution in Confession still retains its force, and therefore the omission, if remembered later on, must be made good.

Com-
munion
and *venial*
sin.

But now to consider *venial* sin more closely in relation to Holy Communion. Here again we must not trust blindly to everything we find in certain spiritual books, where piety is sometimes indulged at the expense of ascertained theology. Asceticism which ignores, or shirks, the teaching of Catholic theology is false asceticism, and can lead to nothing but spiritual perplexities and mischief. A false principle, whether over-rigorous or over-

lax, is like an over-tightened or over-loose screw in some complex and delicate piece of mechanism. It not only affects its working locally, but throws the whole system out of gear.

According to theology, venial sin may connect Cases. itself with Holy Communion in several ways.

(1) On my way to the church I may, *e.g.*, have told a venial lie, said a cross word, been somewhat *weak* in resisting a sensual imagination (without fully consenting to it), all of which are venial sins (that is, supposing *some* advertence on my part). These are cases of venial sin following Confession and preceding Communion. (2) Again, in the act of receiving the Blessed Sacrament from a priest whom I dislike, I give way to a venial sin of interior resentment, or I am impatient of a neighbouring communicant for praying in stage whispers. (3) Or my *motive* in going to Communion is to gain admiration by exhibiting publicly the glories of a new and stylish costume, a venially sinful motive.

In all these cases let us suppose full *advertence* and *consent* to venial sin, and, moreover, that the delinquent does not wipe out the fault by a speedy act of contrition for the fault. Yet in none of these instances can the *essential* effect and fruit of the Sacrament be destroyed—not even in the *third* and worst instance, where, owing to my motive being venially wrong, the very act of receiving, prompted by that motive, is itself venially sinful. Even here the Sacrament *necessarily works an increase of sanctifying grace*, though, of course, far

Sacra-
ment not
spoilt.

less *abundantly* than it would have done had my motive been virtuous. This is true, though it may stagger one who did not know it. But on maturer reflection the knowledge will tend to edify the soul rather than to shock its pious sense; for it gives us a fresh insight into the self-sacrificing love of the Sacred Heart. So determined is this true Lover of our souls to reach them—and at any cost short of entering a soul profaned by *mortal* sin—that He heeds not the dust of our minor faults, through which we so ungraciously force Him to pass on His way to us. This recalls once more the Papal teaching that He made this Sacrament for our needs, and not primarily to safeguard ‘His honour and reverence.’ *Nothing*—let me repeat it—makes a Communion unworthy or fruitless except *mortal* sin. Of course, in the third case one could never *approve* of the person so communicating, since this act would be a sinful one, though only *venially* so. True, an increase of grace was bound to *result* from the Communion. But one can never sanction the procuring of a good end *by the use of an evil means*.

Sacra-
mental
virtue is
innate.

It seemed useful to enter into this matter with some detail in order to drive home again the fundamental principle, too often forgotten, or, at all events, practically much neglected, that the force of Sacraments is inherent in themselves, and that, in the case of the Eucharist and other Sacraments ‘of the living,’ the state of grace is the *sole* condition absolutely necessary for benefiting by Communion. But, of all the seven Sacraments, it is in

Baptism that we see the *ex opere operato* force at its highest power; for, in the case of infant Baptism at least, nothing can possibly depend upon the recipient, since an infant is manifestly incapable of any spiritual dispositions whatever. Yet Baptism gloriously transcends a child of wrath into a child of God, an adoptive brother of Christ, and coheir with Him to the Kingdom of Heaven.

All this is true. Nevertheless, we should gather a very false impression from the teaching of Councils and of theology if we inferred therefrom that a good Catholic communicant ought, or was trained by his faith, to confine himself, or does, in fact, confine himself merely to procuring the state of grace. A due appreciation of so sacred and solemn an act—by far the greatest act open to any layman in this life—obviously suggests the propriety of still more perfect spiritual preparation for Communion. No degree of preparedness that we can attain to, according to the measure of God's help individually vouchsafed to us, could possibly exceed or equal the merits of the case. Why, the reverence, love, and unrivalled created holiness of Mary herself could not do that! At the same time it would be ill-disguised Jansenism to *demand as conditions* for communicating profitably, e.g., a perfect love of God, complete detachment from earthly things, entire abandonment of self to God's Will, complete immunity from venial sin, as though, without these and other more sublime dispositions, it were a *quasi-sacrilege*, a sin of irreverence, or, *at least*, a piece of temerity to

But additional preparation desirable.

approach the Holy Table. If we desire all these higher perfections, how on earth can we ever *arrive* at the increase of grace which they imply unless we receive the Sacrament designed for producing that very increase?

No. XIV.

USE OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST—II.

A. PREPARATION OF SOUL—*Continued.*

2. *Desirable Spiritual Preparation.*

WE pass now from the preparation of soul which is absolutely essential for receiving the Holy Eucharist to that which, though not strictly essential, is nevertheless obviously becoming and desirable. No amount of care and fervour in disposing ourselves to receive Holiness Itself could possibly be excessive. Not even the perfect sinlessness and sublime dispositions of the Immaculate Mother herself could make us strictly worthy to communicate. But, then, besides the greatness of the Divine Guest whom we receive, the measure of spiritual strength possessed by us, the receivers, must also be taken into account, and this varies almost indefinitely. The most that each one can attain to is *his* level best, and it is much if he do not fall below it.

The preparation we are now discussing may be called either *remote* or *immediate*, according as the spiritual industries used are more distantly or more nearly connected with the actual moment of receiving.

(a) *Remote Preparation.*—I. *Freedom from venial* Purity of conscience.
sin (as far as possible) and from any lurking attachment to it. I refer chiefly to venial sin

in its *more deliberate* and calculating forms. A lie of excuse calmly planned beforehand, in order to conceal a fault or mistake with which I expect to be confronted, would be an instance of this cold-blooded kind of offence against God. It may here be repeated that there is no such thing as an '*indeliberate* venial sin.' For if *all* deliberation be absent there can be no *sin* of any sort. Sometimes, however, the expression is used loosely for *partial*, or imperfect, deliberation. Venial sins may be cleansed away by Confession, or even by acts of sorrow without Confession, or by a *devout* use of sacramentals, such as holy water. In this connexion it may be said that one Communion is about the best preparation we can make for another, if only for the reason that, according to the teaching of the Council of Trent, reiterated lately by the Roman Decree on Daily Communion, by the Holy Eucharist '*we are cleansed from venial sins and preserved from mortal ones.*' On this point Ven. Father de la Colombière declared: 'I say that each time we communicate we receive an increase of merit and of habitual grace—so one Communion must necessarily dispose us to profit by another—and that, consequently, the more Communions we make, the better disposed we are to profit by those yet to follow.'¹

Recollection.

2. *Recollection of Mind.*—This consists in keeping more or less constantly before our minds the

¹ 'Sermon on the Eucharist,' '(Euvres du P. de la Colombière,' ii., pp. 116, 117, edition Avignon.

thought of the great act we are about to perform, and banishing from the same—as far as our duties in life and necessary occupations allow—thoughts foreign to the subject of Holy Communion. We may thus recollect ourselves on waking upon the day of Communion. If our recollection be extended further back to the eve, in the form of avoiding frivolity and dissipation of mind, why, so much the better.

By way of maintaining recollection, the following practices might prove helpful—*e.g.*, the occasional use of short ejaculatory prayers expressing faith, hope, love of God, self-abasement at the thought of our own unworthiness, desire to receive our Lord, etc.; also a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament, or the reading of some passage from a suitable spiritual book—for example, from the Fourth Book of the ‘Imitation of Christ’; the performance of some virtuous act, such as an act of charity; or an act of self-denial towards our neighbour, resignation and patience in some trouble or worry, etc.

(b) *Immediate Preparation, or Devotions before Holy Communion.*—People are differently constituted. Some need no *book* of devotions, except their own heads, and can profitably spend the time immediately preceding Holy Communion in devout meditation, or in vocal prayers recited by heart attentively and in a thoughtful or meditative way. The less educated, perhaps, will use their rosary, adding prayers or ejaculations of their own in reference to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament just

Prayers
for Com-
munion.

before going to the Communion-rails. Others need the assistance of a Prayer Book, containing specific devotions for Communion, in order to keep their attention fixed. In this matter the golden rule for each individual is: Do that which you personally find most conducive to earnest devotion. But do not leave things to chance, or to the pious fancy of the moment. Were we expecting some royal personage to visit us in our home, we should make anything but a haphazard preparation. Yet 'a Greater than he is here.'

Com-
municants
serving
Mass.

Those who *serve Mass* and communicate at it may incline towards a sort of superstition that they 'cannot prepare properly' while serving. This difficulty probably springs from an attempt to reconcile two things that do not fit in with each other—viz., due attention to their holy and privileged duties as servers at Mass, and the recital of some set form of devotions of their own devising. While trying to get through some particular prayer they will forget to move the book for the Gospel, or miss the single bell between the 'Sanctus' and the 'Elevation' when the priest extends his hands over the sacred elements. If they would set less store upon their own private pieties, and in a spirit of faith and reverence devote themselves to performing their part in this very highest act of Divine worship as perfectly and attentively as possible, they would be making the very best of preparations for partaking of Holy Communion. What could be a better way of leading up to their sacramental participation in

the Holy Sacrifice than that followed by the Church—the Bride of Christ—in her ritual of Holy Mass? In the case of more educated servers, at least, the use of the Roman Missal—if necessary, in its English form—would happily combine the best of devotions with good serving.

In times when it seems to be every one's ambition to invent some new devotion—especially for other people, and even vilely superstitious ones¹—we need to remember that there are no forms of piety deserving to be compared with the time-honoured prayers of the Church—prayers hallowed by the lips of countless priested saints and martyrs.

This reminds me of another species of pious superstition. People ask sometimes whether it would be a sin to miss their morning prayers on days when they assist at early Mass! They do not appear to think that Holy Mass heard in the morning counts as a prayer at all! I wonder what those superfine devotions of theirs are which they venture to name in the same breath with our Lord's own sacrificial prayer! For they share in that Sacrifice by rationally assisting at it, even if they say not one single prayer of their own. Here again, as in estimating the source of sacramental efficacy, poor human vanity tends to value its own industries above the powerful institutions of the Incarnate Son Himself, heavy laden with the incomparable riches of His Precious Blood.

Length of Immediate Preparation.—In this matter much is left to our sense of religious fitness.

Genuine
Catholic
devotion.

A curious
notion.

Length
of pre-
paration.

¹ *E.g.*, 'the endless prayer chain' nuisance.

Much, too, depends upon our devotional powers and upon our leisure, as limited by our *necessary* occupations and duties in life. There is no law regulating the time to be spent, except such as may be considered as established by a *fairly* general custom amongst ordinarily devout Catholics, who are wont to regard about a quarter of an hour as the minimum. But this custom cannot be said to bind under sin of any kind. In the Decree upon Daily Communion the Holy See says no more than this: 'But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, though they take effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce a *greater* effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better; therefore care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's *strength, circumstances, and duties*.' (The italics are mine.)

Thanks-
giving

What has been said above as to forms of immediate preparation applies equally to prayers in *thanksgiving after Communion*. From the Decree just quoted it is evident that a communicant need have no scruple when home, or other duties, or the necessity of catching a train, involves a certain curtailment of the time spent in devotions before or after Communion. The essential fruitfulness of the Sacrament does not depend upon either practice, and where there is good-will and a desire to do more were it possible, there is no reason to fear that the *amount* of fruitfulness will be appreciably diminished. 'To him who does his

best God's grace will not be denied.' It is obvious, however, that a communicant who went straight out of the church from the Communion-rails, and at once engaged in the pursuits and converse of this world—except in some truly urgent necessity—would, as De Lugo observes, hardly be free from some sin of irreverence. A person who could so act must indeed have a scanty appreciation of the Real Presence still abiding within him.

We need not discuss the question as to how long the Real Presence abides in us after receiving. Probably there is no way of arriving at any invariable rule. All we know is that It continues for the length of time during which, had there been no transubstantiation, a particle of ordinary wafer bread of the same dimensions would, chemically speaking, retain its nature of bread. In this, as in all other relations with our bodily organs, the Blessed Sacrament acts as if It were bread

No. XV.

USE OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST—III.

B.—PREPARATION OF BODY.

I. *The Law of Fasting.*

ELSEWHERE we have called attention to the difference between the *ecclesiastical* fast—*e.g.*, during Lent—and the *natural* fast enjoined upon those who are to receive Holy Communion. The fast prescribed as a *penance* at certain seasons and on certain days in the year limits the quantity and quality of food to be taken, while it does not limit liquids. The fast observed before Communion forbids us to take any kind of bodily sustenance, whether solids or liquids, after twelve o'clock of the night preceding Holy Communion. In another sense, the fast before saying Mass, or communicating, is *ecclesiastical*, since it is not a revealed ordinance of God, but in its origin an institution of the Church only. But, as we saw under ‘Precepts of the Church,’¹ this fact does not prevent the law from gravely binding the conscience to its observance. In fact, it is one of the stricter laws of the Church—far more strict than, *e.g.*, that of hearing Mass on holidays of obligation under pain of mortal sin.

¹ Series I., No. XXIX., p. 320 ; No. XXXI., p. 336.

As applied in the practice of the Church to priests celebrating Mass it is exceedingly strict. It may be asked: If the breach of ecclesiastical laws, such as those just mentioned, entails mortal sin, and hence the loss of God's friendship, wherein does their difference in degree of stringency lie? It lies chiefly in their *cogency* under circumstances of difficulty and in the face of inconveniences. A cause that would excuse from hearing Mass of obligation would not justify the breaking of one's fast before Communion. At the same time it would be untrue to say that the Church *never* dispenses laymen from the natural fast—*e.g.*, those suffering from a disease, not actually dangerous, so as to exempt them from the law, but still severe and protracted, making it extremely hard for them to go through the small hours of the morning without some nourishment, at least in form of liquid.¹

The Reason of the Law.—Undoubtedly this enactment is prompted by *reverence* for the True Body and Blood of Christ received in Holy Communion in form of food. There is an evident fitness, also, that on a Communion-day the nourishment of the immortal soul should be attended to first, and that of the corruptible body second. The Church thus brings home to her children, in a way that hungry human nature can appreciate, the supreme importance of spiritual interests so forcibly taught by Christ: 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?' Fast enjoined for reverence.

¹ Series I., No. XXIX., p. 320; No. XXXI., p. 336.

The forbiddance in question also acts as a safeguard against yielding to intemperance before receiving the Holy Sacrament.

Who are Bound to Fast?—Speaking in general, *all* communicants, priests celebrating Mass included, no matter how late the Mass or the length and fatigue of the ceremony.

When is Communion lawful without fasting?

The following are some instances in which this would be lawful:

'Viaticum'
excepted.

1. In danger of death—when Holy Communion is given as 'Viaticum,' or 'food for the journey' into the next world. The term 'danger' need not be taken in the extreme sense in which physicians sometimes use it—*i.e.*, *immediate*, or imminent danger, so that death appears to be a matter of a few hours. Thus, those attending the sick should not delay in sending for the priest till the doctor voluntarily speaks of 'danger,' but should insist on ascertaining clearly from him whether the sickness has reached such a phase as to give reasonable fear of death resulting, even though there be fair hopes that the dangerous crisis may pass. It is danger in the latter and wider sense that suffices to justify 'Viaticum,' and to exempt from fasting.¹

¹ *Dispensation for non-fasting Communion.* By a Decree of December 7, 1906, the Holy See grants to invalids *not* dangerously ill the privilege of taking nourishment after midnight before Communion on the following conditions: (1) With approval of confessor; (2) if they have been laid up for a month; (3) the food must be taken after the manner of *drink*, not of solid food; (4) in the case of those who have

2. When Viaticum has to be given to the dying, and there is no consecrated Host nor a fasting priest obtainable, Mass may be said not fasting, in order to provide the Blessed Sacrament. For, the law of fasting Communion is only a matter of Church discipline (though a grave one), while the precept to 'eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood' is a *Divine* precept of Christ, and claims precedence. Celebrant exempted.

3. When there is danger of the Blessed Sacrament being destroyed—*e.g.*, in a fire—or profaned—*e.g.*, by burglars or a fanatical mob. Moreover, in default of a priest a lay person is justified in handling the Blessed Sacrament under such urgent circumstances. Of course, it is here supposed that there is no *other sure* way of protecting the Blessed Sacrament. In a fire, for example, it might be quite possible to remove the sacred Contents of the tabernacle to a place of safety. Emergencies.

4. In the case of a communicant who has forgotten the fact of having taken some food during the night after twelve o'clock, and only remembers it after having *approached the Communion-rails*. Good name comes before the law.

Mass or the Blessed Sacrament reserved, in their homes, twice a *week*; in the case of those who have not. twice a *month*. A decree of the Holy Office, September 7, 1897, defines the terms 'after the manner of drink' (*per modum potus*) so as not to exclude a certain limited quantity of solid matter mingled with the drink—*e.g.*, breadcrumbs (*pane grattato*), powdered soup pastes (semolina), and the like. Hence tea, coffee, milk, thin cocoa, beef-tea, broth, etc., fall within the permission. N.B.—The invalid must have been laid up for a month, and have no assurance of a speedy recovery.

The reason is that the Church, like her Divine Master, is so careful of the *character* of each one of her children that she will not enforce her law to its detriment. For, a communicant thus retiring from the rails on second thoughts would be open to suspicion and public criticism, as being, or judging himself to be, in mortal sin; and no one is ever bound to incur such defamation.

Celebrant
seized
with
illness.

5. When a priest is taken ill after consecrating at Mass, and another priest has to take his place in order to complete the Holy Sacrifice. If no fasting priest can be obtained, a non-fasting one may finish the Mass. This is a very practical case, and those who know that the supply priest has taken his breakfast have no cause to be shocked. The law of completing the Holy Sacrifice of Christ supersedes the law of fasting.

Breaking
the fast
no sin,
but stops
Com-
munion.

What is needed *for breaking the fast*?

In ordinary matters of right and wrong, as we know, no guilt is incurred unless we both advert to the wrong at the time and *will* it. Pure accidents do not count. In the present matter—of the fast—these principles do not hold in every respect. There is no question of sin, but only of a *condition* imposed by the Church upon communicants. I commit no *sin* by breaking the fast; only, if I break it, I may not communicate. The sin lies not *in violating the fast*, but in *going to Communion in spite of the violation*.

Forgetful-
ness no
excuse.

Inadvertence, or forgetfulness, never excuses from the law of fasting for Communion. A delicate person who is in the habit of having a cup of tea

brought to her room before rising may by force of habit drink it off on a Communion morning. It is no *fault*, but only her misfortune. Yet she cannot receive Communion that day. On the other hand, an *involuntary* and accidental swallowing of a drop or two—*i.e.*, not a notable quantity—will not hinder Communion,

Say, that before rising on a Communion day some drops of rain penetrate the ceiling overhead, and fall into my mouth, and are swallowed automatically before I can prevent it. The fast is not broken. I am here supposing that the drops are not so very slight as to be included in what will be said below about washing teeth before Communion. For in the latter case even *intentional* swallowing of the *saliva* containing them will not break the fast. So, speaking in general, the fast is violated by the *deliberate* swallowing of *no matter how small a quantity* of nourishment *as a separate thing*. To communicate after such violation is undoubtedly a *mortal sin*.

Now to lay down four theological rules for deciding doubtful cases.

In order for the fast to be broken—

Rule 1.—That which is taken must be (a) received *from outside* (the mouth) and (b) *swallowed down*. These two things constitute eating (or drinking).

What is needed for breaking the fast.
Rule 1.

(a) *From Outside.*—Those who suffer from bleeding of the *gums* need not consider whether they swallow the blood or not, as the latter does not enter the mouth *from outside it*; whereas sucking a cut finger introduces blood from with-

From without.

out the mouth, and bars Communion (unless the quantity be so infinitesimal as to come under *Rule 2*).

Remains
of food.

Remnants.—*Remnants* of food, remaining in the mouth after the last meal overnight has ended, may be swallowed with impunity. The *eating* process is considered to have ended when the meal did. An experienced and holy priest, now gone to his reward, once illustrated this rule publicly in the writer's presence as follows: 'If on waking you find that a mutton-chop has stuck between your teeth from supper overnight, you may swallow it, and go to Communion in peace.' Certainly a test case this—chimerical, but *sound*.

A differ-
ent case.

(b) *Swallowed down.*—A lozenge or 'tabloid' may not be put into the mouth—say at 11.59 p.m.—to be dissolved and swallowed during the course of the night; for the *process of eating* continues after midnight and breaks the fast.

For this lozenge cannot be classed with the above-mentioned *remnants*; it is no accidentally surviving fragment of a meal considered by common sense to have been finished before twelve. On the contrary, it is the meal itself—though a diminutive one—actually in progress after midnight, and hence contrary to the law of fasting.¹

Of course, when the lozenge is taken into the mouth some considerable time before twelve, doubt may arise as to when exactly it was fully consumed—perhaps because the person falls asleep soon after putting it into the mouth, or has no timepiece

¹ De Lugo, 'De Euchar. Disp.,' XV., Sect. II., No. 37.

to go by. This matter will be dealt with under *Rule 4*.

Rule 2.—The nourishment taken must be taken after the *ordinary manner of feeding*. Just as the thing received into the body must be humanly regarded as food, so the *way* of its reception must be what men ordinarily understand by *feeding*. Further, the Church is eminently reasonable, and does not interfere with the vital functions of the body, although their exercise may accidentally involve the consumption of small particles of digestible matter.

Rule 2.
After the
manner of
feeding.

According to these two principles, the following acts do not break the fast :

Swallowing a drop or two of water in consequence of cleaning one's teeth before Communion. Such an infinitesimal quantity cannot be said to be swallowed *as food*, however *deliberately* swallowed, but rather as part and parcel of the natural moisture of the mouth. It is mere weak yielding to silly scruples to go on spitting repeatedly in order 'to make sure' there is no water left after rinsing the mouth! Or, as one theological writer puts it, 'This smacks of Jewish superstition rather than Christian liberty.' Similarly, 'inspiration,' or *inhaling* in the process of breathing, may draw a fly into the mouth. We are not obliged to remove the insect!

A cook may have to taste *very* slightly broth or beef-tea, or a nurse may dip her finger into a medicine bottle to make sure of its contents. Provided there be *no deliberate intention* of swallow-

ing, this tiny quantity will not violate the fast. But the *least* quantity of any nourishment whatever—unless so small as wholly to be merged in the *saliva*—will violate the law if swallowed *deliberately*.

Snuff-taking does not count as a violation of the fast, that process being somewhat different from what men call feeding. For a similar reason *smoking* is not forbidden before Communion, although it may act as some support to the body. *Tobacco-chewing* (saving my readers' presence!) will be unlawful if more than a *very* small quantity of the juice—not distinguishable from the *saliva*—be swallowed. But such an occupation, if engaged in *merely* for pleasure's sake, appears to constitute a venial irreverence in one about to receive the Blessed Sacrament. This point suggests the answer to the query: 'Ought I to clean my teeth before Communion?' My reply would take the form of another question: 'Ought you to *omit* this cleanly act of reverence towards the Blessed Sacrament?' especially in view of what has been said above about drops of water swallowed.¹

Rule 3.
Of the
nature of
food.

Rule 3.—That which is taken internally must be *humanly regarded as having the nature of food or drink—i.e.*, something calculated to nourish or strengthen the body, and although perhaps 'indigestible' in the popular sense (like half-boiled potatoes or acorns), still capable of partial diges-

¹ *Inhaling*—*e.g.*, for throat or chest affections—may evidently be classed with *smoking*. *Spraying* the mouth or throat with liquids is another matter, and should be referred to the confessor.

tion. Thus *medicine* is forbidden. On the other hand, the swallowing of hairs, or fragments of nails (in the case of those who bite theirs), or of dead skin separated from the hand, would not hinder Communion; nor would swallowing sawdust, pins, threepenny-bits, and the like. For interpreting this part of the law we are not bound to study chemistry in order to discover whether certain substances can be acted upon by digestive organs or not. Yet if a person learned in chemistry knows for certain that a particular substance is so acted on, then he must classify it as food, in the sense of the Church, and may not take it before Communion. If at all doubtful upon the point, he is free to act upon the opinions of theologians who do not regard it as food, whether the said opinions be chemically correct or the reverse.

Rule 4.—In Case of Doubt as to the Fact of having broken my Fast. I may sometimes be uncertain whether I have broken my fast or not. Fidgets should bear this principle in mind: *facts are not to be presumed, but have to be proved.*

Rule 4.
Doubts

Take this case. Nervosa often has doubts on Communion mornings whether she has broken her fast. Here are some examples: (i.) She doubts whether she has taken any food at all; or (ii.) she knows she drank a glass of hot milk somewhere after 10.30 p.m., but is uncertain whether midnight had arrived, for her clock had stopped meanwhile; or (iii.) being obliged to take a large 'tabloid' on retiring to rest, before it is consumed she falls asleep, and on waking between 1 a.m.

and 2 a.m. she finds it vanished. Was it done with before midnight? In each case she argues: 'It's a mortal sin to communicate after breaking the fast. Now I must make sure of not communicating unworthily.' And she omits Communion 'for safety'; in fact, she misses a good many in such ways.

Now in every one of these cases Nervosa might and ought to have gone to Communion with a good conscience. Liberty comes before law in the order of Nature.

The *breach*
to be
proved.

In order, then, for her to be bound to forego her liberty to communicate, the legal obligation to abstain from doing so has first to be proved. It is not her *freedom* she has to prove, for that remains in possession until dislodged by a law restraining her. That restraint, as affecting her, depends upon the existence of a certain fact—*i.e.*, did she take anything after midnight? Now, Nervosa has no clear evidence that she did, and hence she need pay no attention to her fears and misgivings—which are, in fact, scruples. 'But,' quoth she, 'I'm not *sure* that I *didn't* break my fast!' 'Of course not, seeing that you *doubt* whether you *did*! The two things follow each other. But then you have not got to prove that you *didn't*, but that you *did*.' 'Is it, then, lawful and safe to receive in this uncertainty?' '*Perfectly* lawful and *perfectly* safe. Your uncertainty is about the actual fact—as to the time of your eating; and that uncertainty will probably remain. But there is no shadow of uncertainty that you *may* receive Communion, in

spite of the fact still remaining unsettled. For it is theologically certain that, until you have proved your violation of the fast, and hence your duty to omit Communion, you still retain the full liberty which you previously had to communicate.' ¹ The same principle applies, of course, to *doubts about consent to grievous sin*, since my last Confession. I must be practically sure that I gave full consent—that there was more than mere momentary dalliance, or some weakness in resisting, in order for me to be obliged to go to Confession again before receiving. Besides, the other two conditions for mortal sin must have been verified. ²

2. Decency.

Our Blessed Lord does not care about smart clothes or 'fashions.' The poor factory hand who comes to Communion in a shabby dress, with a shawl over her head, and in wooden clogs, is just as welcome at His Banquet as the finest lady decked out in the latest Paris 'confections,' and often, perhaps, more so—not in respect of clothes, but of dispositions. Personal tidiness.

Still, tidiness and cleanliness need not be the monopoly of any particular class, sex, or age: and both are to be desired out of reverence to our Lord. St. Francis of Sales somewhere defines the Christian rule of dress thus: That it attract not special attention, either by its excessive smartness or its remarkable shabbiness. All should be becom-

¹ See also Series I., p. 296, footnote.

² Series I., pp. 243, 244.

ingly apparelled according to their condition *and* their means (lest tailors and dressmakers suffer).

Dis-
habille.

One does not care to see people appearing at Communion in such a way that on returning home they have 'to make themselves decent' to meet their family at breakfast. So, too, boys half-washed, *minus* collars or neckties, and with untied bootlaces, flicking about the church pavement, leave something to be desired in the way of reverence.

3. *Reverent Demeanour.*

Rever-
ence of
manner.

It is not well to rush up to the altar, arms swinging, elbowing others, and staring about right and left. Without necessarily assuming 'stained-glass attitudes,' the hands can well be composed together decently and the eyes cast down. Let us remember that true Catholic worship is external, as well as interior.

4. *Manner of receiving Holy Communion.*

How to
receive
Com-
munion.

It is surely part of our duty of reverence in receiving the Body and Blood of Christ to perform our part in this tremendous act as intelligently and becomingly as we are able. Bodily dispositions for Communion should certainly include seemliness and care in the *way* of receiving the Blessed Sacrament into our poor bodies from the hands of the priest.

It should be the communicant's endeavour not to make this responsible duty of the priest a difficult and anxious one, by awkward tricks, when a little care and common sense will prevent this. The following points seem the chief ones, and they

may prove useful to first communicants of whatever age:

1. *Use of the Communion Cloth, or Card.*—If a cloth be used, let it be spread out as flat as may be over the palms of the hands, and let it (or the card) be held just under the chin, and close to it. When a card (covered with linen) is used, do not forget to pass it on to the neighbour on your left *at once* after receiving reverently.

2. *Hold the head well up*, slightly inclined backwards, and raise it in *good time*, to be ready for the priest. It is far more reverent to render the passing of the Sacred Host safe and easy than to keep the head low out of a notion of adoration and humility. Women should specially note this direction No. 2, on account of certain styles of head-gear. Hats, however spacious, are incapable of receiving Sacraments. The priest must often be tempted to deplore St. Paul's rule about women covering their heads in church, or at least sigh for the practicable *mantilla*, when the outlook consists of a mere table-land of hat.

3. *Open the mouth well* (yet without *exaggeration*), advancing the tongue moderately, indeed, yet so as just to overlap the lower lip completely. It is *highly unbecoming* to receive the Sacred Host upon or between the lips; it should not even touch them. Yet if the tongue be kept back within the mouth the priest evidently has to choose between placing the Blessed Sacrament on the lower lip or practically thrusting his fingers inside the receiver's mouth to make all safe, which is also unbecoming.

4. *Keep the head perfectly still*, after you have raised it, when the priest comes to you in turn. *Particularly avoid darting the head forward towards the priest's hand in the act of receiving.* By this awkwardness—or ‘grabbing,’ as it amounts to—you run the risk either of breaking the Sacred Host, or causing It to fall from the priest's hand, in which It is but lightly held.

5. Do not be in anxious, fidgety haste to swallow *immediately* on receiving, but allow the Sacred Host to rest quietly and naturally upon the tongue for a few *seconds*, after which swallowing will ordinarily prove quite easy. An opposite course will probably cause the Blessed Sacrament to adhere to the palate of the mouth, whence It will be with difficulty dislodged by the tongue. The *teeth* are not to be used at all. Of course, it is never lawful to touch the Sacred Host, nor should the teeth be used.

6. Ladies wearing *veils of ethereal texture and lightness* should be careful not to forget to remove them on going to the rails; for in the dim light of the sanctuary they are not always visible to the priest, especially not to a short-sighted one. This caution is prompted by an actual experience.

7. When a number of persons are communicating at the same rails, *retire* from the rails to your place *immediately* after receiving reverently, so as to give room to those waiting for their turn to approach.¹ While you are stopping on at the

¹ If you are in the last batch of communicants, do *not* retire till the priest has placed the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle and *closed its door*.

rails enjoying your devotions, those waiting are distracted, disturbed, and perhaps provoked to faults of impatience by your selfishness or forgetfulness of others. Unselfishness and thoughtfulness for others, so far from spoiling the fruit of your Communion, will, as an act of charity, make it more pleasing to your Divine Guest. Even in the most solemn acts of His Life He was always considerate to all. When about to work His stupendous miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes—a preparation for His Eucharistic teaching—He thought of the weary and hungry multitude, and bade them rest upon the plentiful grass. At the Last Supper He showered kindnesses even upon Judas, and in His very Agony on the Cross He had thought, and provided, for His Mother's coming childlessness, and our own need of a tender spiritual Mother.

VIATICUM.

Nothing more remains to be said on this form of administration, reserved for those dangerously ill, except this: Children *in danger of death*, who have reached the age of reason but have not yet been admitted to their first Communion, may well be granted the great grace of receiving their first, and perhaps also their last, Communion, provided they have the necessary minimum of knowledge concerning the nature of this Sacrament—viz., that It is not common bread, but 'our Lord's Bread from Heaven.'

No. XVI.

EFFECTS OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST.

‘EVERY effect that material food and drink produce in reference to the life of the body—that is, sustaining, increasing, repairing, and rendering it pleasurable—this Sacrament produces in regard to the life of the soul.’ So Eugenius IV. describes in general terms the effects of Holy Communion.

1. Our
‘daily
bread.’

To enter more into detail. 1. This Sacrament *sustains* and *preserves* our spiritual life by warding off the death of mortal sin. For one who has unhappily contracted some grievously sinful habit there is no surer means for rooting out the vice than a liberal use of Holy Communion. One might almost say that in this Sacrament lies his only hope of final victory over passion—if, that is to say, the Eucharist be accessible to him. For, should circumstances beyond his control make Mass, and therefore Holy Communion, a very rare luxury, God will undoubtedly give him the grace necessary for self-conquest through his earnest use of other spiritual means, such as prayer and careful avoidance of dangerous occasions.

2. In-
crease of
spiritual
life.

2. Besides this negative support to the life of grace, by which mortal diseases threatening the same are warded off, the Eucharist *positively strengthens* that life by *increasing* the amount of

sanctifying grace in the soul; and this additional measure of holiness brings with it a greater abundance of actual helps in times of spiritual need. It fosters in the soul a relish for the invisible things of God, and consequently diminishes that attraction towards sensual delights which is bred by our concupiscence. Hence, as Pius X. has so recently instructed us, our Lord designed the Eucharist primarily as a help to man for 'overcoming sensual passion,' a counterpoise to the allurements of sense. Hence, if this Sacrament forms in general our most powerful means of conquering grievous temptations, this is especially true in the case of carnal ones. It is as though such close proximity to the most pure Humanity of Christ necessarily purified the corruption of our fallen flesh.

3. Moreover, this union with Christ tends to perfect in us that *resemblance to Him*, the Perfect Man, in which human holiness consists. We become more like to Him by feeding upon Him. In this instance, the *reverse* happens in our reception of this Heavenly Bread to what takes place in bodily nourishment. Our bodily food is transformed into our own substance. As the phrase is, we 'assimilate' our food, and that word means literally 'to make like.' That which we eat becomes as part of ourselves. But when receiving the Body and Blood of Christ as our spiritual food the opposite occurs: *we* are 'assimilated' by Christ our Lord and made more like to Him. The greater absorbs the lesser. Thus

3. Made
like to
Christ.

St. Augustine represents our Lord as saying to the communicant: 'It is not thou who shalt change Me into thyself, but I Who will transform thee into Myself!'

The question as to a newly-born babe's likeness to this or the other member of the family often forms a fertile subject of debate in the domestic circle, and necessarily. For at first the infant's features are imperfectly developed and ill-defined; but when abundant nourishment has promoted growth, the child's lineaments become more decided and pronounced, and the likeness more evident. So, too, in the spiritual life. By Baptism we are born to God, and enter by adoption into the Divine family, becoming 'partakers of the Divine nature.' But it is by nourishing ourselves freely with the strong food of the Eucharist that our resemblance to our Eldest Brother, Jesus Christ, is brought out and gradually perfected.

4. Union
with God
in charity.

4. In Holy Communion the Christian soul is *united closely to God* in the bonds of charity, and, as a consequence, any venial sins which are upon that soul hindering the perfecting of that union are swept clean away—unless, indeed, the soul should still cling to them with disordered affection. This union with God is not *physical*, but *moral*. It is, however, a *real* union, and not a figurative one. It is a real union of love between the soul and its God, founded upon His presence within us corporally.

When the Blessed Sacrament is within our

bodies there is, of course, no physical contact with Christ of a *direct* and *immediate* kind. There is, however, an *indirect* contact through the medium of the Sacramental species under which He lies concealed. One may compare this kind of contact in some way to that effected by the infirm woman in the Gospel¹ who touched the hem of our Lord's garment and was instantly healed. Yet how very close we are to Him in Holy Communion may be illustrated from our Lord's words on the occasion referred to: 'Who is it that touched Me?' He did not say, 'Who has touched My garment?' but, 'Who has touched *Me*?' as though the two things were identical. And yet there is, of course, a far more intimate connexion between our Lord and the Sacramental species in the Eucharist than there was between our Lord and His earthly garment. So the communicant has an advantage over the woman in the Gospel.

5. Lastly, the reception of our Lord's Body and Blood is a *preparation for a glorious resurrection*, a ^{'Pledge of future glory.'} prelude to heaven, and, as St. Thomas Aquinas expresses it in his antiphon, *O Sacrum Convivium* (O Sacred Banquet); it is '*a pledge of future glory.*' Our Lord Himself has given this pledge: 'He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever.' And again: 'He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My blood *hath eternal life*, and *I will raise him up in the last day.*' The Fathers of the Church dwell much upon this effect of the Blessed Eucharist.

¹ St. Luke viii. 43-46.

They represent it as a necessary sequel to our being incorporated with Christ in Holy Communion that we become, as it were, part of *His own Flesh* ; and that, since 'no one ever despised his own flesh,' Christ will not allow ours, so often united to Him in Communion, to perish finally, but will share with it the immortality and other qualities which belong of right to His risen and glorified Humanity.

The seed
of Resur-
rection.

The Body and Blood of Christ become like some seed planted in our corruptible bodies, which lies, as it were, dead during the winter of the grave, but sprouts and blossoms forth into a glorified body in the eternal spring of the Resurrection.

No. XVII.

FREQUENT AND DAILY COMMUNION.¹

THE ROMAN DECREE OF DECEMBER 20, 1905, PART I.

OUR Holy Father, Pope Pius X., has signalized ^{The} his Pontificate by inaugurating a new phase in the ^{Pope's} spiritual life of the Church. He urges upon the ^{earnest} faithful without distinction the practice of Daily Communion. He does not *command* this, but expresses his most earnest desire that a usage 'so pleasing to God and salutary' should become as general as possible. Utterances of his illustrious predecessor, Pope Leo XIII., in reference to Eucharistic Congresses, had already indicated the growing desire of the Holy See in this direction. In February, 1905, Pope Pius issued an indulgenced prayer 'for the spread of the pious practice of Daily Communion,' which, besides being a devout prayer, may be called a compendium of theology concerning the use of the Holy Eucharist.²

But the most important document of all is the

¹ See also 'Notes on Daily Communion,' by the present writer. R. and T. Washbourne, Paternoster Row, London.

² This prayer, translated into English, may be had at the *Messenger* Office, Dublin, with the imprimatur of the Archbishop of Dublin.

An epoch-making Decree. Decree issued by Papal authority on the 'Dispositions needed for Frequent and Daily Communion,' dated December 20, 1905, a Decree that may truly be called epoch-making.¹

Not new teaching. Not, indeed, that Daily Communion is an innovation in the Church. For, as the Holy See points out, it was the usual thing amongst the early Christians. In days when any hour might bring torment and death to the follower of Jesus, the Heavenly Food of the Eucharist became to the Christian martyr a daily source of strength and constancy unto the end. Then, again, in the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent expressed its wish that the hearing of Mass and the partaking thereof sacramentally should go hand in hand.²

Jan-senism. The practice of the faithful as regards the *use* of the Eucharist has varied in different ages, but there does not appear to have been any variation in *theory* amongst Christians until in the seventeenth century the Jansenist heresy attacked Catholic principles themselves, and kept souls aloof from Communion—except on rare occasions—on pretext of the high degree of holiness and piety needed for a worthy reception, and out of due reverence towards so holy a Sacrament. Thus did the enemy of souls disguise himself as an angel of light and lead souls astray under the specious appearance of greater virtue. Jansenism exacted from would-be communicants a measure

¹ An authorized translation to be obtained of R. and T. Washbourne, Paternoster Row, London. Price 1d.

² Session XXII., chap. vi.

of interior holiness such as they could only hope to reach by a free use of the very Sacrament which it withheld from them. A suicidal policy! It was like telling a man to climb up to the house-top, and promising him the help of a high ladder when he got there! But so widely did this senseless policy prevail, especially in France, that the Communion-rails became deserted even at Easter-time. Even religious, like the hapless nuns of Port Royal, ruled by their misguided Abbess, Angelique Arnauld, and deliberately poisoned with the blighting heresy by her priestly relatives, in some cases reached the lengths of refusing the Last Sacraments when dying, out of reverence!

Jansenism eventually fell under the formal condemnation of Rome. The death-blow was struck, Con-
demna-
tion. but the body still quivered with obstinate vitality. The devastating soul-plague was mainly banished, yet infection still lurked almost unconsciously amongst clergy and laity. The Decree implies that germs of it survive to this day—notwithstanding repeated cautions of the Holy See—in the form of rigorous spiritual exactions from those who would communicate freely and daily. In truth, specimens of this severity are often to be found in books written by learned and holy men, who are justly above all suspicion of any leaning towards unorthodoxy. Theological books published previously to the late Decree—even the more recent and lenient—still describe at length, and with much precision, the exceptionally virtuous dispositions to be required by directors

from those who would receive Communion oftener than once a week, and which should be exacted in ascending degrees, according to the greater *number* of their Communions. For, weekly Communion, though it may appear frequent to some of my readers, is not what has been technically known as 'Frequent Communion.' This term has been used generally by theological and ascetical writers to signify several Communions in the week, or daily Communion, and, commonly, as made under one and the same *Confession*.

Secret
of this
rigorism.

No one can mistake the mainspring of these multiplied restrictions—viz., the desire to secure *reverence* towards the august Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood. This has been made the *ruling* idea, subordinating to itself every other consideration. Those who led but an averagely Christian life were deemed unfit to receive it more frequently. Frequent reception was reserved as a sort of monopoly to more perfect souls—a privilege for *les âmes d'élite* endowed with greater holiness and piety.

True and
false
reverence.

One can hardly blame an attitude of mind which, whatever else its defects, revealed a deep sense of the dignity of this great Sacrament. Yet it is just this well-meant system of limiting the free use of the Eucharist to certain classes of souls which has been given its quietus by the Decree of December 20, 1905. Not that the Holy See has declared great reverence for our Divine Lord to be unimportant, nor even less imperative than before. How could it be? But what Rome

has done—and earned our lasting gratitude for doing—is to teach us by her authority that *abstention* from frequent Communion is a *false way of showing reverence* and esteem for so Divine a Gift, because it thwarts the *chief* purpose for which Christ so lovingly gave It. Her late pronouncement goes straight to the root of the matter, where it presents us with *the true view of our Lord's purpose* in instituting the Eucharist, and in doing this Rome has inaugurated nothing less than a revolution in previously received methods of spiritual direction as regards permitting, or advising, frequent and daily Communion.

To quote the pregnant words of the Decree: Rome
 ‘Moreover, the desire of Jesus Christ and of the ^{goes to the root of things,} Church that all the faithful should daily approach the Sacred Banquet *is directed chiefly to this end*—that the faithful, being united to God by means of the Sacrament, may thence *derive strength to resist their sensual passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults,*¹ and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable.

Truly a luminous commentary upon the universally accepted axiom of theology: *Sacramenta propter homines*—that is to say, as our Lord declared concerning the Sabbath observance, Sacraments are made for the benefit of man, and not man for the Sacraments. The words of the Decree make it abundantly clear that, in Christ's

¹ ‘Sinnest thou daily? Then, receive daily’ (St. Augustine of Hippo, quoted by the editor of the *Acta Sanctæ Sedis*, March, 1905).

design, neither freedom from venial sins of daily occurrence, nor a full control over passions, nor a great constancy of virtue in the face of grievous temptations of whatever sort, nor still less those further refinements hitherto prescribed by ascetics, form the necessary equipment of a daily communicant. For Communion is here declared to have been desired by Christ precisely for removing venial sin, enabling us to subdue yet unconquered passions, and confirming weak souls in virtue against mortal sin. In so far as Christians have in the past stinted themselves and been stinted in their use of this 'Daily Bread,' this is mainly traceable to a feeble grasp of this root-idea regarding the *true purpose* assigned by the Lover of souls to the Sacrament of His marvellous love. This purpose, we are warned, is not mainly to secure His honour and reverence, but to meet our own sinful need of Him.

'We come to Thee, sweet Saviour,
Because we need Thee so.'

A rooted
prejudice.

But still the old fallacy of rigorism *will* recur. Is it not gross *irreverence*, is it not contempt of so All-Holy a Thing as the Blessed Sacrament that It should be degraded to the level of a mere drug for salving our vile spiritual sores? Does it not seem like dragging our Holy Lord through the mire of human sinfulness, even though confession has cleansed us substantially from mortal sin? The Holy See well knew, by experience in this very matter, that the perverted conception of due

reverence for the Sacrament would die hard, like other deeply-seated religious prejudices.

Therefore it added the following momentous clause, which explodes the very foundations of the misconception: 'So that its (the Eucharist's) *primary* purpose (*i.e.*, "in the desire of Jesus Christ") is *not* that the honour and reverence due to our Lord may be safeguarded, *nor* that the Sacrament may serve as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients.'¹ Hence the holy Council of Trent calls the Eucharist 'the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from daily sins.'² In other words, *true* reverence for our Lord's stupendous Gift lies in *using* it, and for the purpose He intended, *not* in keeping at a distance lest it be defiled by contact with us half-cleansed sinners.

The true principle.

Let me be pardoned for a very trivial comparison. A friend, knowing my lameness, presents me with an excellent walking-stick. But I—on the plea that it will get soiled with London mud—hang it up over my mantelpiece and never use it. I limp along as before without support. Would the donor be pleased and honoured by this treatment of his very practical gift? Would he not rather say, 'My very object in giving it you was that it should help you along in mud and dust'? The Eucharist is as a staff to our weakness, enabling us to journey on day by day, even to the

An illustration.

¹ St. Augustine, Sermon LVII., on St. Matthew's Gospel, *Of the Lord's Prayer*, No. 7.

² Session XIII., chap. ii.

heavenly mount of God. But the comparison fails? It does—both in dignity, perhaps, and also in its application. This last defect, however, is all on the right side. For though we may soil an earthly appliance by using it for its proper purpose, yet the All-Holy and All-Pure, whom we receive into our venially-tainted hearts, is absolutely beyond all soiling. He can only cleanse, and derive fresh honour and reverence from the cleansing.

The
Eucharist
itself
meets the
difficulty.

The misconceived plea of 'due reverence,' as the Holy See shows us, has been with many the responsible cause of too sparing a use of Holy Communion. And yet, in view of what faith teaches us concerning its nature and dignity, it is natural we should feel surprised and, as it were, staggered to find reverence for the Divine Guest proposed to us apparently as an object of secondary importance. That, of course, it is not. We have already seen that it is not a question of more reverence, nor of less, but of the *true way of showing the greatest amount of reverence*. Yet from one point of view the apparent discounting of reverence should surprise us less, and not more, in the case of this particular Sacrament. The Eucharist is unique in that it is double-sided. Besides its *sacramental* character, it has a *sacrificial* one—as the Sacrifice of the Mass. Now, it is exactly through this, its sacrificial aspect, that we are enabled to pay back to God's Majesty—and pay back fittingly and adequately—our creature debt of due honour and reverence. As a Sacra-

ment the Eucharist is God's pitying and self-abasing gift to man; as a Sacrifice it is man's tribute, through the hands of the Divine Priest and Victim, Jesus Christ, to the Holiness and Majesty of God. Thus, although in adapting this 'divine medicine' to our own base needs we might seem to neglect that primary need and duty of reverencing God, we shall satisfy both these requirements by carrying out the wish of Trent, that reception of the Sacrament should commonly be joined to attendance at the Holy Sacrifice.

The defective use of Communion has been traced to a wrong notion of reverence, and this last, in its turn, to a faulty conception of our Lord's purpose in instituting the Eucharist. But may not this exploration of causes be carried even further?

Reflection may suggest to us that the ultimate root of previous misconceptions concerning the main purpose of Holy Communion—now 'scotched' by Rome—is to be found deeper down. It may be seen to spring from an inadequate appreciation of the genius of Christianity itself—by which I mean the genius of that fundamental Christian mystery, the Incarnation of the Divine Son, with its sequel, the Passion and Death of Jesus.

Rome's teaching rests on the Incarnation.

Not that those 'pious and learned' men, referred to in the Decree as excluding, for prudential motives, the rank and file of souls from frequent access to Holy Communion, can be supposed to have lacked a theoretic appreciation of these mysteries; but only that they appear to have

lacked consistency in working it out to its logical conclusions with reference to *use* of the Eucharist.

Con-
sistency
needed.

When a Protestant deems the Real Presence of its very nature incredible, not because Infinite Power *could* not work the marvel involved, but because Infinite Greatness cannot be conceived as tolerating such close contact with sin-infected creatures, how do we meet the difficulty? Do we not retort, if he be a believing Christian, by another question: What, then, about the self-abasement of God in the Incarnation? What of Christ's familiar intercourse 'with publicans and sinners?' And, still more, what about His voluntary submission to the indignities and outrages of the Sacred Passion? Had regard for 'reverence due' to Divine Majesty prevailed in the Divine Plan of Redemption, as we know it, evidently there could have been no lowly manger and no ignominious Cross. And yet, in the end, 'glory to God in the highest,' the supreme and ultimate end of all things, was secured, although this was not the *proximate* and *immediate* end of the Incarnation and Passion. That immediate object was the rescue and raising-up of fallen man. 'Although He thought it no robbery to be equal to God,' nevertheless 'He humbled Himself'—emptied Himself out—'taking the form of a servant.' Whatever loss of external honour such ineffable condescension entailed, that was to be, so to say, compensated for by man's praise, thanksgiving, and love of a God who could so forget Himself in order to be mindful of sinful man, and

stoop so low in order to raise him up. And just as the Son of God did not look first to His own dignity in becoming a helpless babe, or in freely offering Himself to be gibbeted like a felon on Golgotha, so, ever consistent in His wondrous love, neither did He make reverence for Himself the first object in instituting the Sacrament, which forms the memorial of these His wonderful works of love. He became a despised Infant for love; 'a worm and no man' for love; and, once more, in Holy Communion, to use the words of the Decree, He becomes a Divine Drug (*Divinum Pharmacum*) for love. In a word, our Lord is all *for us*—'the Child born to *us*, the Son given to *us*.' He became Man 'for *us* men, and for *our* salvation.' He suffered and died for *us*. And the holy Sacraments—especially the Eucharist—are also 'for the sake of *men*, and not men for their sake.' Jesus is all for us, and though He deserves that the hearts of those who receive Him should in turn be 'all for Jesus,' yet they can hope to become so only by a frequent union with Him in the Holy Sacrament.

One more reflection upon causes. Is not this great revival of eagerness for the daily 'Manna,' and Bread of our souls an obvious fruit of the gradual working throughout the Universal Church of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? History would seem to confirm the theory. No student of the Church's life, as portrayed in the ecclesiastical history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, would, we fancy, doubt that the cult of the Sacred

Frequent
Com-
munion
and
devotion
to the
Sacred
Heart.

Heart, as a public devotion, was the weapon put by God's Providence into the hand of the Church for combating Jansenism, with its Old Law spirit of fear, and its false and suicidal view of 'reverence' due to Sacraments.

But why stop here? Heresy is known to die hard, and, as we know, muscular movement does not always end even with death. 'The poison of Jansenism,' the Decree reminds us, 'has not wholly disappeared.' It was devotion to the Heart of Him who said 'Come to Me' which grappled with, and knocked senseless, the formal and soul-freezing heresy of the day. Then it can be hardly rash to say that it is the truth of God's human, as well as Divine, sympathy with sinful man; His anxiety to bring man ever closer to Him in the bonds of charity—in a word, it is the spirit of devotion to the Sacred Heart which is now about to end the cadaverous twitching of a defunct Jansenism, and enable the Church to crown its triumph over that heresy by means of frequent and daily sacramental union with the Divine Heart. 'Come!' It cried, to the labouring and sorely burdened, and now, please God, all unworthy as we are, our cry shall be 'We come!'

Importance of full instruction.

And is there not a useful moral to be drawn from what we have been considering? When closer acquaintance with this epoch-making Decree enables us to realize what untold treasures of sacramental grace, such as might, perhaps, have added largely to the roll of declared saints, have been missed by millions through the honestly

unsuspected influence of a heresy formally defunct, shall we any longer need convincing of the supreme importance to be attached to *thorough* religious instruction? Thus the light which this splendid Decree sheds so abundantly upon us reflects its rays backwards, and brings out into fresh prominence the Holy Father's previous forcible insistence upon the crying need, for all ages and classes, of Christian Doctrine.

Our present Holy Father, on his elevation to the Chair of Peter, publicly set before himself as the motto or key-note, of his Pontificate, 'Re-storing all things in Christ.' *'Instaurare omnia in Christo'* (the renewal of all things in Christ). How truly are His public acts corresponding with this holy aim! They seem all to converge towards the inner sanctification of the Church's life. Holiness of life must start from a *knowledge* of Christ's teaching and will. Accordingly, one of the Pope's first acts was to secure thorough instruction in Christian Doctrine for all ages and classes of the faithful. But knowledge will not suffice. It is not enough to be 'hearers of the law.' A constant reception of that great means of grace—the Holy Eucharist—is needed in order that we may become 'doers of the law,' also, and may conquer those human passions which cause the flesh to revolt against the 'law of the spirit.' And to complete the good work, His Holiness has just sought to kindle in our hearts a strong desire for union with our Lord in His Sacrament of Love, by urging us to still more fervent devotion to the Divine Heart of

Love. He has prescribed¹ an annual renewal of the Consecration of the world to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so zealously and yet so humbly promoted, in the last years of Leo XIII., by that holy servant of God, Mother Mary of the Divine Heart (*née* Droste zur Vischering), Superioress of the Good Shepherd Order at Oporto.²

¹ By a Decree of the S. Cong. of Rites, August 22, 1907.

² Since going to press, the Cardinal Prefect of the S. Cong. of Rites, acting by command of Pope Pius X., has issued (April 10, 1907) a circular letter to each Catholic Bishop, desiring that special devotions in honour of the Blessed Sacrament be held yearly in churches during the Octave of Corpus Christi—or at some other time, if deemed more suitable by the Ordinary. The opening paragraphs of this letter clearly express the motive of His Holiness—namely, *to further insist upon the desirability of Frequent and Daily Communion*. After relating the hearty welcome with which the Pope's decree on that matter has been received by the Catholic world—as proved by numerous letters addressed to the Vatican from all parts—the Cardinal Prefect continues: 'The Sovereign Pontiff—who is overjoyed at the salutary fruit thus far derived—being anxious that it should ever continue, and, moreover, continually increase, has charged me with the duty of exhorting your Lordship, and all the Catholic Bishops . . . that they use every effort in order *that the Faithful may receive the Holy Eucharist frequently, and even daily*. . . . The Holy Father, moreover, judging that it will greatly contribute towards this end if the Christian people offer sweet violence to God by putting forth their earnest prayers in common, desires that every year, if possible, a triduum of supplication be held,' etc.

No. XVIII.

PAPAL RULES FOR FREQUENT AND DAILY COMMUNION.

THE ROMAN DECREE OF DECEMBER 20, 1905, PART II.

THE Papal Decree just reviewed contains certain 'Articles'—nine in number—concerning frequent, and even daily, reception of the Eucharist, that 'salutary practice' which our Holy Father so earnestly desires to see widely taken up amongst the faithful. For present purposes it will be enough to quote and comment upon five of these Articles, which may be conveniently called 'Rules.'

RULE I.—Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life, so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom.

Frequent—i.e., in one and the same week, according to theological authors.

Daily—i.e., every day literally. In order, however, to benefit by the Decree on Plenary Indulgences,¹ Communion may be treated as daily even if omitted 'once or twice.'

¹ See No. XLI., p. 367.

Frequent and daily. This combined expression repeatedly occurs in the present Decree, while 'daily' stands more than once by itself as an equivalent for both expressions. Hence, evidently, the two terms are not intended as a perfect logical division into distinct species, but merely represent degrees of frequentation. For all legislative purposes the document treats the terms on an equality. This is natural, since 'frequency' is a vague term that does not imply any *definite* number of Communions in the week, and 'daily' only expresses the highest number possible.

Open to all the faithful . . . so that no one can lawfully be hindered. No member of the faithful is excepted, therefore younger first communicants are not.¹ None may be hindered—an echo of our Lord's words 'and hinder them not.'

In the state of grace—i.e., not conscious of any certain mortal sin committed since the last sacramental absolution received.

The Holy See declares the two stated qualifications to be *sufficient* as well as necessary. Hence those more exacting spiritual conditions laid down in certain books as needed for daily Communion are known henceforward to be *unnecessary* (though, of course, good and preferable); their absence, consequently, is no sufficient reason for not communicating daily.

The explanation of the second condition belongs to the next Rule.

¹ See Second Decree, No. XIX., p. 184.

RULE 2.—A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the Holy Table should do so, not out of routine, or vain-glory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this Divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.

Here we have an authentic and most important explanation of a 'right intention,' the only other qualification needed for daily Communion besides the state of grace—*i.e.* :

Not out of routine . . . but for the purpose of pleasing God. . . . Here we have an authoritative explanation of the second condition for daily Communion. *Not out of routine*, which cannot mean 'not by habit,' since a formed habit is the perfection of every virtue. *Routine* supposes inattention to the sacredness of the great act we are performing—an automatic reception, *e.g.*, *merely* because others around us are going to the rails—a sheep-like performance.

Vain-glory—*e.g.*, receiving simply for the purpose of being thought pious.

Human respect—*e.g.*, going merely to please others, or to avoid unreasonable criticism. This is not the same as electing to communicate, because others may *reasonably* be disedified by our abstention on some special occasion calling for extra devotional practices. That is giving edification, which is good.

For the purpose of pleasing God. . . . In a word, for religious or supernatural motives, of which the Holy See does not appear to be

giving us an exhaustive list, but only some samples. These samples, however, are specially to be preferred. For union with God in charity, and the healing of our defects, are among the *chief effects* of the Holy Eucharist.

The expression 'Divine Remedy' (in the Latin, literally, 'Divine Medicine or Drug'—*Divinum Pharmacum*) is noteworthy as a reassertion of the teaching given in the preamble of the Decree concerning the true purpose of our Lord's loving Institution.

RULE 3.—Although it is most expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially from such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning in future; and if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins, and from all affection thereto.

Expedient . . . should be free from venial—i.e., expedient, advisable, but not necessary as a condition for receiving daily.

It is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins. Holy Communion is here represented as the infallible means for gradually purging out venial sins, and not as a gift *presupposing* freedom from them as a condition of fitness to receive. Indeed, *complete* freedom from them is practically impossible, as the Church expressly teaches.

RULE 4.—But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, though they take effect ‘*ex opere operato*,’ nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better, therefore care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one’s strength, circumstances, and duties.

Produce greater effect in proportion as the dispositions are better. Here we are warned against the extreme of despising devout personal effort merely because it is not essential in order that the Sacrament may profit us. There are degrees in the harvest. It is the Sacrament working of its innate power (*ex opere operato*) that ploughs the ground, not our piety. But in proportion as we prepare the ground better beforehand, so will the harvest be *more* abundant.

Serious preparation—i.e., serious in intensity and care, rather than in quantity and length. For the latter will be limited according to ‘each one’s strength, circumstances, and duties,’ as mentioned in the Rule.

Children and invalids may lack strength, mothers and servants, employés of various kinds, may lack time, and other circumstances may prove unfavourable for as long and recollected a preparation and thanksgiving as could be desired, and such as others who are more at liberty could well procure.

RULE 5.—That the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater prudence

and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade anyone ('ne quemquam avertant') from frequent and daily Communion, provided that he is in a state of grace, and approaches with a right intention.

The confessor's advice should be asked. This does not appear to mean that advice is to be incessantly asked: nor asked as an *essential condition*, since the object in asking here set forth—viz., 'for greater prudence and more abundant merit'—does not imply that. Moreover, in Rule 1 the essential conditions are stated to be two only—the state of grace and a right motive. The confessor, no doubt, will need on his side to keep a vigilant and paternal eye upon his daily communicants—i.e., in order to see that these two essential conditions alone required do not fall into abeyance, and to intervene if they do so. As long as they do not, he is told by the Holy See 'not to dissuade anyone' from daily Communion.

Here are all the Rules of practical importance to the laity, except they chance to be in charge of 'establishments of whatever kind for the training of youth,' in which, amongst other institutions, Article VII. says 'that "frequent and daily Communion" is to be especially promoted.' The plastic rising generation is always the greater hope for inaugurating a new order of things. St. Francis Xavier worked through the children, and other missionaries have largely copied him.

That this promotion is not to be confined to *older* first communicants who are entering their 'teens,' but should extend equally to younger ones, will be shown in the next section or number, where a second Decree or 'Answer' of Rome on this precise point will be examined.

No. XIX.

CHILDREN AND FREQUENT OR DAILY
COMMUNION.

IT only remains to be asked : Does the Holy See intend to apply its original, earnest recommendation of frequent and even daily Communion to *younger* children also, who have but recently made their First Communion ? Some misgivings had been felt on this point, which resulted in Rome's being consulted. The outcome was an 'Answer' of some length returning a *decided affirmative*. The *summary* of the 'Answer' is as follows :

Decision : 'The Sacred Congregation of the Council, after duly weighing all things, resolved, September 15, 1906, to decree as follows : To the first question [*i.e.*, about the frequent Communion of children], that frequency of Communion is recommended according to Article I. of the Decree [*i.e.*, of December 20, 1905, on *frequent and daily* Communion] *even to children*, who, once they have been admitted to the Holy Table according to the standards prescribed in the Roman Catechism, Chapter IV., No. 63, ought not to be prevented from partaking of It frequently, *but should rather be exhorted* to do so, to the rejection of the opposite practice anywhere prevailing.'

It should be carefully noticed that the Roman

Congregation is not deciding anything *new* in this further decree, but is only explaining to doubters, and re-enforcing, the genuine sense of its first Decree.

This is important; for, in the 'Answer' just quoted, 'frequency of Communion' is spoken of in connexion with children, but the expression 'daily Communion' is not repeated. This might at first sight appear to limit 'daily' Communion to older children.

But such an interpretation will not hold in face of the fact that the Congregation professedly rests its answer upon *Article I. of the original Decree*, and that article makes no distinction of age, but speaks of 'all the faithful of whatever state or condition.' No one will deny the claim of a child, who has made its first Communion, to be reckoned among the 'faithful'! Further, in the main body of this 'Answer,' the whole case of the little ones is discussed at length, and *in their favour*, two points being specially brought out into relief: (1) That they *above all others* need to be 'imbued with Christ' early, 'before their passions get the start of them.' (2) That, just because of the innocence associated with their years, they are at least as likely to present the necessary conditions for daily Communion as their elders. These conditions, as we have seen already from the original decree, are two *only*: (a) The state of grace; (b) a right motive or intention in approaching.

If we fixed our attention upon a single word or expression, instead of weighing words in the light of the whole contexts of the two Decrees in ques-

Objection.

Refuted by context of this Decree.

A cobweb.

tion, we might be misled by the fact that the Congregation, in deciding for the younger ones, does not actually use the epithet 'daily'—that is to say, not in the summary or closing decretorial clause of its 'Answer.' It does not say *there* in so many words 'daily' Communion. It *does*, however, when formulating the precise doubt presented to the Holy See for solution.¹

How to
brush
it off.

Yet, if we *are* to be very accurate, neither do we find in that place the precise term '*frequent* Communion.' The literal expressions used are 'frequency' (or perhaps 'frequentation') 'of Communion' and 'frequent participation of It' (*Communione frequentia* and '*ejus participatione frequenti*'). The truth is, if we study carefully the phraseology of the original decree—of which the present one about children is an authentic explanation—that the two words 'frequent' and 'daily' are evidently not used by way of a *perfect division*, nor in contrast to each other. 'Frequent and daily' are at one time coupled together, at another 'frequent' is used by itself to *include* 'daily,' as it obviously does, unless we deny that a man is receiving 'frequently' who receives *every day*. So, too—the other way about—'daily' includes 'frequently.' There is no theological, or, one might

¹ 'Ought daily reception of the Eucharist to be recommended . . . even to all children whatsoever after they have made their first Communion?' ['Quotidiana Eucharistiæ sumptio in Catholicis ephebeis suaderi ne debet etiam pueris quibuscumque post susceptam primam Communionem?'] (*Acta Sanctæ Sedis*, October, 1906, p. 501).

add, intelligible, ground for defining 'frequent' Communion so as to limit its meaning to some *definite* number of Communions in the week that falls short of seven times. Such arbitrary determinations of arithmetic remind us of those extremely various ones made at times by moralists when defining how often certain duties must be fulfilled in order to escape mortal sin.¹

So when the Congregation approves of younger children being encouraged to 'frequent reception' of the Eucharist, one cannot suppose it to be drawing a distinction between Communion, say, two or three times a week, and Communion every day.

It is also important to notice that the *ground* upon which people specially doubted about younger children was—as the 'Answer' sets forth—that the Latin word (*ephebeis*) by which the original Decree had described educational establishments for the young (Article VII.) would, in the dictionary sense, mean establishments composed exclusively of boys of at least twelve years, and girls of at least fourteen years of age. Such was, in fact, the reason for doubting alleged, in spite of the phrase (Article VII.) 'establishments for the training of youth of *whatever kind*.' And in that article the Holy See certainly recommends to such 'frequent and *daily*' Communion in an especial manner (*præsertim*).

A grammarian's
plea
rejected.

To sum up. What appears to need specially emphasizing in the present connexion is the following :

¹ *E.g.*, acts of faith, hope, and charity.

A condensed
argument.

No one who knows the text can deny that in its original Decree Rome *specially* recommended frequent and *daily* Communion to the young under training in *ephebeis* (Article VII.).

Now, in its *second* Decree, or 'Answer,' Rome *disallows* the distinction suggested between recent first communicants and older children; it also disallows the alleged *reason* for doubting (taken from the canonical meaning of *ephebeis*), and, moreover, simply refers doubters back to Article I. of the earlier Decree, which article certainly recommends frequent and *daily* Communion to 'all the faithful' indiscriminately. It would, therefore, be too much to ask us to believe that by using the general expressions 'frequency of Communion,' 'frequent participation' in the decretorial clause of its 'Answer,' Rome was practically eating its own words and newly advising some vague measure of frequency for children recently admitted to first Communion, thus cutting off one large section of 'all the faithful,' mentioned in Article I., from *daily* Communion. Rome, then, is clearly using the phrase 'frequency of Communion' so as to include *even daily* Communion, as, indeed, the phrase does of its own nature, as well as in the terminology of not a few standard authors on moral theology.¹

The
highest
spiritual
direction.

To conclude. The whole attitude assumed by Pope Pius X. in these consoling Decrees may be summed up as follows. The Holy Father, our

¹ *E.g.*, Génicot treats of daily Communion under the general head 'Frequent Communion' (vol. ii., p. 200).

Supreme Spiritual Director, says to us equivalently:

Our Lord, my children, has given you His Body and Blood for the 'daily bread' of your spiritual lives. The Church, guided by the Holy Ghost, has ever told you so from the days of the early Martyrs. Come, then, my children, all of you—the youngest first communicant as well as the oldest of my flock who is nearing eternity! Come, all of you, no matter what your state or lot; no matter what your weaknesses, temptations, and faults; no matter what your spiritual level! Come, all of you, and satisfy the loving and self-humbling desire of the Divine Heart to be sacramentally united to your souls, that He may heal their most desperate diseases. Come! and come as often as you will, as often as you are able. For, provided you be in the state of grace and approach from a right motive, *ye cannot be counselled by your spiritual guides to come too often*. Thus shall all things be 'renewed in Christ.'

No. XX.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

SECTION II.—SACRIFICE IN THE NEW LAW.

Creature's
duty of
Sacrifice.

IT is not enough for the fulfilment of a creature's personal duty to God that Christ our Lord should have offered Himself once for us all upon the Altar of the Cross. By this, of course, I do not mean—what Low Church Protestants so often think Catholics mean—that the Atonement of 'the Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,' left anything to be desired in point of *superabundant adequacy* and *internal efficacy*. That could not possibly be; for He who offered Himself was God as well as Man, and his offering, consequently, was simply of *infinite value*.

What I do mean is that our Lord's Sacrifice on the Cross obviously does not do away with the personal duty of every creature to pay unto his God and Maker the highest form of outward worship possible to man, and that is *sacrifice*.¹ Otherwise man's worship would be shorn of its

¹ The necessity of the external element, as well as of the internal or spiritual, in human worship was shown under the First Commandment ('Letters on Christian Doctrine,' First Series, No. 11., pp. 14-18).

most important feature, its highest and chiefest function ; it would be truncated worship.

Christ met this need and duty of every creature by instituting the daily Eucharistic Sacrifice—called the Mass—on the night of His shameful betrayal—a Sacrifice, however, that derives its virtue from the one offered once and for all upon Calvary.

Creature's
need of
sacrifice
met.

It stands towards that offering in blood as the means by which the all-sufficient merits of the Precious Blood are to be *applied* day by day to the Christian Church. Some theologians call it 'the Sacrifice' of Application, or '*applying*' Sacrifice.

Is the Sacrifice of the Mass, then, one with the Sacrifice of Calvary? The answer is 'Yes' or 'No,' according to the point of view adopted, though one might with substantial accuracy briefly answer 'Yes.' The two Sacrifices are one and the same in this chief respect: that the Victim *offered*, Who is also the High Priest *offering*, is the same in both—that is to say, Jesus Christ is as truly present in the Eucharist as He was on Golgotha.¹ They differ, however, in more than one respect. The *manner* of offering is different. The death of the Holy Victim in the Eucharist is moral and mystical, and free from suffering and actual blood-shedding. There is also this further most important difference: that

Is the
Mass the
same as
Calvary?

¹ The High Priest offering is our Lord Himself. The priest saying Mass merely acts as a *minister* to Him, albeit, according to His plan, a necessary one.

on the Cross this identical Divine Victim merited for us superabundantly once and for all, while in His Eucharistic Sacrifice He neither does nor can merit at all, but only distributes and applies to us the merits which He acquired and finally stored up for us on Calvary. Mass, then, is, so to say, the executive of Calvary. The Scripture speaks of our drawing 'waters in gladness from the fountains of the Saviour.' Some may compare the Mass to a lever which is attached to the sluice of some immense reservoir, and which lets loose the torrent of waters for our use, and yet can add nothing to their quality, power, and abundance.

Yet, since by Christ's actual ordinance the Mass has become necessary as a means of irrigating the Church with the merits of His Passion and Death, the two Sacrifices may fittingly be viewed as forming together one complete and *operative* whole, even as the sluice above mentioned may be held an indispensable part of a working reservoir.

Applica-
tion of
Mass to
the soul.

It has been said just now that the Mass applies to us the merits of the Cross. But thence it does not follow that those merits are applied to us *infinitely*, or in an unlimited degree, in every Mass. For, a person might argue: 'If the Mass is of infinite spiritual value, then one single celebration would have satisfied the needs of all the world from the dawn of Christianity until the crack of doom. That which is infinite must not only suffice for every want, but must even leave after use an infinite balance to the good.' The

practice of the Church, however, in all times and places refutes this notion, and shows her belief and teaching by her repetition of Masses. She has received no revelation as to *how much* benefit we derive from each Mass, and hence can give us none.

Of course, there was no antecedent necessity for another mode of sacrifice in addition to the Atonement in blood on Calvary in order to bring home to our souls the fruits of the latter. The infinite resources of Divine Wisdom and Power could have devised some other plan, or have been content with the Sacraments for the purpose. But that proves nothing, since neither was it *antecedently* necessary, for undoing the effect of Adam's sin, that the Son of God should become man at all, and still less that He should suffer death, and such a death, in order to reconcile us to God. As the Church hymn has it, 'Amor coegit tuus' (Thy love it was that forced Thee). Love, and not necessity. In the Christian Dispensation we have to deal with facts, and not with what might have been, according to our poor notions of exigency and fitness.

The Church teaches us that, in point of fact, Our Saviour ordained the Eucharist as a 'real and proper Sacrifice,' and not merely as a Sacrament, and at the Last Supper made His Apostles priests for offering it, when He said, 'Do ye this for a remembrance of Me.' That while this Sacrifice is indeed what Christ made it—namely, a *memorial* rite—it is not a bare commemoration

A perpetual
Sacrifice:
how
necessary.

A 'real
and
proper
Sacrifice.'

only, for it communicates to men here and now the very benefits of the event commemorated. In this it differs from an anniversary celebration which a nation may hold in memory of independence won for it in the past by the sword of some patriot. That the Eucharist is a 'true and proper Sacrifice,' and not merely a *service* in which the Sacrament is distributed to the faithful, and which is, therefore, incomplete without their attendance. The Anglican rubrics, by requiring that there should always be at least three communicants at the Eucharistic rite as a condition for its performance, plainly reject the Catholic belief of Old England in the intrinsic value of the Eucharist as a Sacrifice offered for the honour of God, and distinct from Communion distributed for the benefit of those assisting; whereas in the Catholic Faith Mass stands upon its own independent dignity, though there be no congregation assisting—nay, though the priest be without a server even, as might happen in the backwoods of some far-off missionary land.

The Mass
no depre-
ciation of
the Cross.

What I have said above furnishes a sufficient answer to the objection that the doctrine of the Mass *depreciates the Sacrifice of Calvary*, as though the latter were not all-sufficient for man's spiritual needs. On the contrary, as we see, its dependence for its value upon the efficacy of our Lord's Atonement on the Cross *forms an essential part* of our belief concerning Holy Mass. It is precisely *on account* of its relation to Calvary that Catholics attach such value to the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Our Lord might, had He willed it, have dispensed with this instrument for imparting His gifts of grace and salvation; but, as our faith teaches us, He did not will this, any more than He chose to do without those other channels of His Precious Blood, the Sacraments.

The Thirty-nine Articles of the English Church explicitly condemn in opprobrious and violent terms the 'Sacrifices of Masses.'¹ Some advanced High Churchmen, to whom these articles are a stumbling-block, make vain attempts to reconcile Article XXXI. with their comparatively modern return to sacrificial doctrine. They urge that what this stupid article intends to reject is not the Mass as such—far from it—but certain pre-Reformation abuses connected with the Mass. As to what these beliefs or practices, vaguely called 'abuses,' actually were, either they do not explain, or else they refer to some alleged local or personal irregularities, or superstitious uses, which, however, they cannot show to have formed any part of the doctrine as authoritatively held by the Church generally, nor to have been countenanced by Rome. But this theory, however helpful, receives no confirmation from the ascertained history of the 'Great Rebellion' set on foot under Henry VIII.

That the Mass *as such*, and not merely as mis-used, was reprobated by the reforming worthies must be plain to anyone who considers the character of countless sacrilegious acts committed

The Mass
rejected
by the
Reforma-
tion.

¹ Article XXXI., Book of Common Prayer.

in our churches under Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth, as interpreted by the known opinions and recorded utterances of the Protestant leaders. Not to mention numerous other instances, we have a conclusive sample of Reformed Anglican views about the Mass in 'A Declaration of Certain Articles' imposed by Anglican Bishops upon their clergy 'for the unity of doctrine to be taught and holden,' which is to be seen in full in Burnet's 'Reformation' (vol. iv.). This illuminating document was ordered to be read by every clergyman, upon taking charge of his parish, 'for the instruction of his people,' and was to be read out again at Christmas and at Michaelmas. The following quotation from the ninth article of this Declaration gives us the whole gist of the matter: 'I do not only acknowledge that private Masses were never among the Fathers of the primitive Church . . . but also that the *doctrine* that maintaineth the Mass to be a propitiatory sacrifice for the quick and the dead, a means to deliver souls out of Purgatory, is neither agreeable to Christ's ordinance, nor grounded upon doctrine Apostolic, but, contrariwise, most ungodly and *most injurious to the precious Redemption of our Saviour, Christ, and His only sufficient Sacrifice offered once for ever upon the altar of the Cross.*'

A controversial quibble.

From this expression of the episcopal mind, especially in the words I have italicized, we see that the Declaration, while utterly misrepresenting the Catholic doctrine as to the connexion between the Mass and Calvary, renders the

favourite High Church distinction between the Sacrifice of the Mass and ‘Sacrifices of Masses’ altogether irrelevant. Moreover, the plural form ‘Sacrifices of Masses,’ which we are sometimes asked to believe was specially framed by the Reformed National Church to convey a godly distinction, was not originated by them at all, and can be made to bear no such significance. The expression appears a century earlier in the acts of the Catholic Council of Florence, a Council representing both East and West. The united Latins and Greeks professed their belief in the doctrine that the souls of the faithful departed are benefited by *Sacrifices of Masses* (*Missarum sacrificia*), prayers, alms, etc.

No. XXI.

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

It is the primary duty of every rational creature, as having received life and all else from God, to confess indebtedness to his bountiful Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, and to humbly acknowledge the Divine Supremacy over him, body and soul, for life and for death. Moreover, since the Fall of Man, a created being conscious of sin feels the need of appeasing the justice of a God whose anger he has incurred by transgressing His Divine laws, and thus vainly and wickedly asserting his independence. Further, anyone who realizes that God is the bounteous Source of every good gift will also feel the need of thanksgiving for past benefits, and of pleading for a continuance of Divine favours in the future. All these, his duties and wants, man has endeavoured to meet by means of that supreme act of worship called sacrifice. Yet only under the Christian Dispensation is he enabled adequately to satisfy them.

Reason
suggests
Sacrifice.

The law of sacrifice has been universally recognized in all times by mankind, by the pagan or savage races as much as by Christians. In the accounts given us by travellers and explorers, who have penetrated among peoples hitherto unknown, one can rarely find an instance in which some

form of sacrificial rite does not enter into their public worship. And even races lacking any fixed form of public worship—such as some of the Indian tribes in the Philippines—will, upon certain emergencies, at least, appease their deities by impromptu sacrifices. These pagan rites may be distorted by hideous superstition and degraded by nameless abominations; the deities worshipped may be devils or mythical heroes, mainly distinguished for their cruelty and other vices. Still, deep down underneath this superimposed mass of horror and corruption there lies the fundamental instinct of reason that those superior powers which rule man's destiny must be worshipped for their attributes and propitiated by means of sacrifice.

So far there has been but one form of Christian profession which has done violence to this instinct of rational man and excluded sacrifice from its religious rites, and that is Evangelical Protestantism in all its varying shades. Till the religious revolution of the sixteenth century not even the Red Indian had dreamt of ignoring this chief act of worship due to the 'Great Spirit' whom he acknowledged. But the Protestant Reformers and their followers, in this and some other countries, laid profane hands upon the sacrificial altars of the Catholic Church, tearing and casting them down, breaking them up, and desecrating them by conversion to ignoble and even shameful uses. Overwhelming evidence of this may still be seen in and near our old cathedrals, abbeys, and parish

Reason
violated.

churches in spite of praiseworthy efforts in places to repair the mischief. Under the Reformed Gospel, priest, altar, sacrifice, went together by the word as inseparably connected. As Dean Lefroy (Norwich) writes:¹ 'Priest, sacrifice, altar, were the central pivots round which wellnigh everything turned in the English Reformation.' And again: 'These doctrines totalized in sacerdotalism, and we have now to see that sacerdotalism was at the Reformation discarded by the nation and rejected by the Church.' The Dean then proceeds to show in conclusive details how all *sacrificial* ideas were eliminated from the Reformed rites. No amount of modern patching up and 'continuity' theories can remedy this essential alteration tyrannically effected under Henry VIII. and his illegitimate offspring, however creditable it may be that saner counsels have begun to prevail, and that many Anglicans should now disown, at least in theory, all this sacrilegious violence and robbery on the part of their historic religious ancestry.

The
notion of
sacrifice.

What is the idea of sacrifice ?
It is the permanent separating-off from human uses and dedication to God's honour of some visible object under the control of man, who in some sort consumes, destroys, or renders it unavailable for ordinary purposes, and this as a tribute to God's supreme right over his being and over all he has. It is, in fact, a process of *substitution* by which man makes what is his to represent

¹ 'The Christian Ministry,' p. 494.

himself, and desires that its entire alienation from himself and immolation to his Maker shall express the whole-hearted subjection of himself to the Divine dominion. The victim or thing thus offered stands proxy for himself.

According to the absolute and inalienable right of God over all His creation, the literal destruction of human life in His honour would be no more than His due. He could justly claim this. But in His moderation and love He will not demand it. This truth is exemplified in Abraham's attempted sacrifice of his own son Isaac at the Divine command. God began by bidding Abraham to sacrifice his first-born in order to try the father's obedience, and test his full recognition of the Divine right. The patriarch obeyed promptly, and made all needful preparations for the painful rite. But as he was about to strike his boy, God stayed his hand, and bade him sacrifice in Isaac's stead an ewe that was entangled in a bush hard by. In one instance only has God actually accepted a human sacrifice—in the case of His own Incarnate Son, the Victim of the Cross. But even here we have substitution, our Saviour receiving in His own Person the chastisement which by right should have fallen upon us sinners. 'The chastisement of our peace is upon Him.'¹ He blotted out the writ that was against us—not against Him—taking it away and fastening it to the Cross.²

Substitution for man.

From the above underlying notion of sacrifice

¹ Isa. liii. 5.

² Col. ii. 14.

Sacrifice reserved for God only.

it becomes plain that this form of worship must be *reserved for God alone*. The offering of it to any creature whatsoever, no matter how holy and exalted, would be rank idolatry. Due reverence bids us acknowledge superiority. God, however, is not merely Superior, but is alone Supreme. Thus in the Catholic Church Mass is never offered to the Blessed Virgin nor to saints.

There is another feature of sacrifice calling for notice. Man is a *social* being. God framed his nature for association with others of his own kind. He was not intended to be a solitary wild man of the woods; so he must also worship God as a *member of society*. This introduces a demand for *corporate* or *public worship*. Yet, as it is clearly impracticable for each member of the community to take an official part in *corporate* worship, some one must be legitimately deputed to represent the community and perform the sacrificial act in its behalf. In more primitive states of society public worship seems to have been performed family by family, some member of the household—its head, for example—officiating in the name of all. Such, no doubt, would have been the case in Abraham's day. Yet even in his time we read of Mëlchisedec, 'priest of the most high God,' and King of Salem, offering sacrifice with bread and wine in Abraham's presence on the latter's return from the rescue of his brother Lot out of the hands of the conquerors of Sodom and Gomorrha.¹ Later on, when God had more fully organized the Jewish people, a High

¹ Gen. xiv. 14-18.

Priest was specially chosen and consecrated at His command, who, assisted in his office by other sacred ministers, offered sacrifices for the whole nation.¹ Such was Aaron, in the time of Moses. He was a type of the Great High Priest to come in respect of His Sacrifice in blood upon Calvary, just as Melchisedec's offering *in bread and wine* foreshadowed Christ's unbloody Sacrifice in the Eucharist under the same appearances, first in the Supper Chamber, and after, even until now, throughout His Catholic Church.

That Sacrifice exists only in the Church governed by the successor of that Apostle with whom Our Lord shared His titles of Rock and Shepherd,² or in other bodies which, though now separated from her, have not tampered with the sacrificial or sacerdotal import of the priestly Ordination rites originally derived from her. For the power of Orders once given remains, even though the right to use and confer them has been forfeited by schism.

The Council of Trent teaches us that the Mass is that 'clean oblation destined, as the Lord fore-^{The Mass in prophecy.} told by the mouth of Malachias, to be offered in every place to His name which should be great amongst the Gentiles' (Mal. i. 11). The classic Bible text here referred to by the Council occurs in the opening chapter of the aforesaid prophecy, where God upbraids the Jewish priests for the gross neglect and contempt of the Divine honour

¹ Exod. xxx. 30.

² St. Matt. xvi. 18; St. John i. 42, xxi. 15-17.

exhibited in their external sacrifices, and finally rejects the latter as valueless. 'If you offer the blind for sacrifice, if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it to thy prince if he will be pleased with it, or if he will regard thy face, saith the Lord of hosts. . . . I will not receive a gift from your hands.' Then the prophet, speaking after the manner of seers in the present tense, continues: '*For from the rising of the sun even until the going down My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation, for My name is great amongst the Gentiles.*'¹

Malachi's
words
con-
sidered.

The allusion here to the Eucharistic Sacrifice, as taught us by the Catholic faith, appears unmistakable when all points of the utterance are weighed together. It cannot be the Sacrifice of the Cross that is chiefly meant, if at all, for that oblation was not offered 'in every place,' nor in any intelligible sense 'among the Gentiles,' but in the very heart of Israel, and through Jewish, not Gentile, agency. Moreover, in the *liturgical* usage—at least, of the Old Testament²—the Hebrew word *minchah*, standing in the original text for 'oblation,' is employed for the *bloodless* sacrifices of the Jews in food, a form usually accompanied with the burning of incense, and not for the Jewish sacrifices of animals *accompanied with slaughter*. So the above Hebrew term would be a particularly suitable one by which to refer to the New Sacrifice under appearances of food (bread and wine) in

¹ Mal. i. 11.

² Lev. ii. 1, 6, 7

which the spotless and Divine Victim was to offer Himself in an unbloody manner. As a modern commentator notes, in Solemn (High) Mass the prophecy is literally fulfilled even as to the incense.

Neither can this clean oblation be an *interior* one of the heart, but, on the contrary, a visible and external offering in public worship. Otherwise the strong antithesis set up in the prophetic context we are considering, between the corruption of the *visible* and *external* sacrifices of the Jewish priests and the perfection of the 'clean oblation' which was to replace and eclipse them, would be unintelligible.

For it cannot be reasonably urged that the vast superiority of the promised 'oblation' lay in the fact that it was to be a purely *spiritual* and invisible one instead of being also external and visible, unless, indeed, we are to depreciate our Lord's Sacrifice on the cross, which was certainly of the latter kind. Those virtuous dispositions or habits of life which are spoken of in the Bible as 'sacrifices' are so called by analogy and metaphorically, and hence they do not satisfy the drift of the prophetic passage before us.

The Sacrifice of the Mass is so truly beyond all danger of priestly corruption, such as the prophet condemns in God's name, that no unworthiness of the ministering priest can possibly defile this pre-eminently and Divinely clean Victim and High Priest, Jesus Christ, the Immaculate Lamb of God.

The
Sacrifice
that
cannot
be spoilt.

No. XXII.

THE ESSENCE OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE.

The point at issue. THE point that shall now briefly engage our attention is this: How does the Mass fulfil the conditions of 'a true and proper' Sacrifice, as Trent has called it? In other words, in what feature of the Mass do we find the nature of a true Sacrifice verified? To grasp the full import of this question it must be noticed that we are here seeking the marks of a true sacrificial act *in the Mass itself*. For that the Mass *commemorates* a true Sacrifice—that of the Cross—is here assumed. But the commemoration of an act does not usually possess the essential qualities of the act commemorated. Thus, the late Nelson Centenary did not defeat the combined naval forces of France and Spain in 'Trafalgar's Bay.' To the question proposed every instructed Catholic will probably reply at once: 'In the consecration of the bread and wine.' That is so: for the view that the Communion belongs to the bare essence of the Mass has come to be pretty generally dis-
countenanced by theologians. But the question here asked goes somewhat deeper. We are inquiring, further, What is there *about* the consecration that realizes the true idea of Sacrifice?

This is a point worth considering in the light of theological opinion, since the definition of the Church does not extend thus far. When dealing previously with the theory underlying the practice of sacrifice generally, we saw that the victim, or thing sacrificed, was subjected to some deterioration—that is to say, was either destroyed—as, for instance, when slain or burnt—or else reduced to a state in which it was no longer suitable or available for human purposes—as, for instance, when, in pagan ‘libations,’ wine was poured out on the ground in sacrifice to the deities. The wine was not so much destroyed as rendered unserviceable for human use. Where, in the consecration at Mass, is the destruction or slaying, or else this unfitting for human purposes?

We may begin by saying that there are at least eight or nine different and orthodox explanations offered by Catholic theologians, all of high, if not all of the very highest repute. Diversity
of views.

Be not alarmed, dear reader. I have no intention of bewildering you with them all. I select two: (1) that of the Belgian Jesuit, Father Lessius (1554-1623), which is the one more generally favoured; and (2) that advocated by the Spanish Cardinal de Lugo (1584-1660), so ably championed by his fellow-Jesuit in recent times, the late Cardinal Franzelin. These two explanations cannot be said to conflict one with the other unless put forward in an *exclusive* sense, and it seems that they may be well combined together, and so form to us a more complete

picture of this August Sacrifice—a veritable abyss of wonders.

The commoner view.

Lessius places the sacrificial character of the Mass itself in the mystic or moral death involved in the separate consecration of the bread and of the wine. Starting from the doctrine that—*as far as the actual words go* as used in the respective consecrations—the form used at the *first* consecration would only place upon the altar the Body of Jesus Christ, and the form used at the *second* consecration only His Precious Blood, Lessius holds that this separation of Body and Blood which *would* actually occur, but, in fact, does not and cannot, for reasons of concomitance,¹ constitutes a moral or mystical death or slaying.

That this separation of Body from Blood as signified, though not actually produced by the separate consecrations, gives us a true *representation* of death needs no showing. And it is even something more than a representation. By way of an illustration we may make a not impossible (but still most unlikely) supposition. Let us imagine, then, that one of the Apostles—all of whom our faith teaches us were ordained at the Last Supper—had offered the Eucharist at some moment of time between our Lord's death on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead. In those hypothetical circumstances the words, 'This is My Body,' and the others, 'This is My Blood,' would have placed the Body and the Blood upon

¹ See p. 98.

the altar (under their respective appearances) *in the condition in which they then were*. But *at that time* they were separated by death. The soul of Christ, too, from the same cause, would have been absent from both Body and Blood—again a state of death. There is, then, a *latent* force in the separate consecrations—one which, after our Lord's rising again immortal and impassible, can never come into operation¹—by which Christ our Lord *would be* placed on the altar in a physically slain condition.

But this *representation* of death, even when taken with the latent power just described, does not wholly satisfy those who look for an actual deterioration of some sort as produced here and now in the Victim made present by the act of consecration. To such de Lugo's view will, perhaps, seem preferable, even as it has been most strongly preferred by Franzelin.

Cardinal de Lugo, then, seeks for some sort of lowering or deterioration in the condition of the Victim as taking place at every Mass in virtue of the consecration. But, of course, he does not expect to find a *physical* lowering. As we have already reflected, this would be simply impossible in a risen Christ. So the Spanish theologian searches for a *moral* lowering of state (*status declivior*), and finds it in a truth already explained above² as to the *manner* in which our Lord exists under the sacramental species.

¹ See Rom. vi. 9.

² No. X., p. 98, 'How *in* the Host.'

'Lowered
state.'

We explained earlier that the Sacred Humanity of Christ—and hence His Body and Blood—although really and substantially present, and not after some ghostly fashion, did not exist in the Eucharist after the *manner* of human or material bodies; for these, as far as our earthly experience goes, are extended in space, each part of them corresponding to a different portion of space, whereas the mode of existence in the Eucharist is rather after the *manner* in which a man's spiritual soul subsists in his body—*i.e.*, whole and indivisible in each part of it as well as in the whole. Now, it follows from this exceptional and preternatural state of Christ's Body that it has not the natural use of Its bodily senses and organs.¹ In this point, therefore, our Lord wills His Sacred Humanity to undergo a certain change for the worse—only in a *moral* sense—by becoming thus unfitted for the ordinary purposes of human life and intercourse. He, who is 'our Life,' lies there *as if* He were a dead thing, though in truth He overflows with the exuberance of Divine and human life. Though He is 'before all,' and by Him all things consist—'the Head of the body, the Church, the Beginning, the First-

¹ *E.g.*, I am lolling quite irreverently before the Tabernacle, but I pull myself up with the thought, 'Our Lord sees me lolling.' But, as far as any normal use of His sense of sight is concerned, it would be more accurate to reflect, 'He *knows* my lolling'; for it appears contrary to reason to suppose that the extended figure of my listless person can infringe upon the non-extended retinae of His Holy Eyes—*i.e.*, as present *sacramentally*.

born from the dead'—and 'in all things' holding 'the primacy,'¹ nevertheless, He seems to have no will of His own, no power of resistance, so utterly does He place Himself under the dominion of man in order to acknowledge on man's behalf the Divine dominion.

Unconsulted and unresisting, He is raised aloft for blessing, carried in procession, conveyed through dark and noisome alleys to His dying poor. How great is the intensity of that emptying-out of Himself of which St. Paul writes, by which this Lover of Souls 'humbles Himself'! No longer content with lowering Himself to 'the form of a servant,' in which He was still 'beautiful among the sons of men,' in His Eucharistic self-immolation He goes a step lower still, placing Himself under unhonoured form of *food*.

Here, then, we have, if not the two *chief* explanations of how the Mass verifies the requirements of a true Sacrifice, at all events, those that will probably appeal most to the untrained theological mind. Suarez has an original one of his own, thought to be well worthy of his unquestionably high genius. Cardinal Cienfuegos advances another, which is not unreasonably judged by some to be singular and far-fetched.

As Franzelin observes—with that modest regard for the well-reasoned views of others which marks true learning—these various opinions do not so much conflict as show forth different aspects of this marvellous Sacrifice. The two here selected

¹ Col. i. 17, 18.

may be made to supplement each other. Lessius's theory brings out the *relative* and *commemorative* character of the Eucharist, while de Lugo's emphasizes the truly sacrificial nature of the Mass itself, as shown in the 'lowered state' resulting from the Real Presence of the human as well as Divine Victim and High Priest. Franzelin's view, as he himself shows, does not involve a denial of the received view that both consecrations are necessary for constituting the Holy Sacrifice. The separate consecrations, with their representation of death, belong essentially to the Mass as actually instituted by our Lord—that is to say, as a relative sacrifice commemorating His death upon the Cross.

A modern
theory.

For completeness' sake, a modern view concerning the essence of the Eucharistic Sacrifice may be briefly noted in conclusion. Some theological writers, in order to escape from their difficulty in discovering any destruction 'or lowered state' in the act of consecration—such as de Lugo and Franzelin require and show—or, in admitting as satisfactory any 'equivalent' or 'mystical' destruction, have broached the following somewhat subtle theory, which is here given in brief outline:

The essence of sacrifice, they argue, consists in the *presentation* to God, in a transformed or purified state, of a *victim slain*. They admit that both the *death* or destruction of the victim and its *presentation* are absolutely essential. (In the case of Christ's Atonement on Calvary, it could not,

of course, be denied with orthodoxy that death was of the essence of His sacrifice.) But though the death be essential, it is so as a *necessary means* for arriving at the stage of *presentation*, in which presentation these writers place the act of sacrifice *par excellence*, or climax of sacrifice. Now, since Christ was once slain on Calvary, and now—in the Mass—continually makes presentation of Himself in a glorified state to the Father as a Victim for men, they see no need for seeking out in the Holy Sacrifice itself any ‘lowered state’ or any ‘equivalent’ or ‘mystical’ destruction, in order to safeguard the Church’s teaching that ‘the Mass is a true and proper Sacrifice.’

But any fuller examination of this new theory would carry us beyond the scope of the present Letters.

No. XXIII.

THE VALUE OF MASS.

A Catholic trait. DEVOTION to the Holy Sacrifice—by which I mean actually *hearing* Mass as often as possible, even at some little inconvenience—is one of the distinctive marks of a solid Catholic. By this I do not mean to imply the existence of religious ‘flabbiness’ in those who for *bona-fide* health reasons, or on account of daily work and definite duties of their state of life, or distance from church, find it impossible to realize their sincere *desire* for the Holy Sacrifice. So perhaps my *dictum* should be modified thus: A hearty appreciation of Mass, which leads to *hearing* it on every reasonably possible occasion, is the sign of a solid Catholic. Even strict adherence to Masses of obligation is a sure promise of better things to come in those whose lives are at present far from stainless. Mass, it may be repeated, is the one hope (when available) of those who have not yet determined to break with sin, and to seek speedy reconciliation with God in the confessional.

Heroic
zeal of
our fore-
fathers.

It seems to some observers of our times that practical appreciation of Holy Mass—as an optional practice, at least—is a less common characteristic of our younger generation than it is, or was, of the preceding one. Yet many amongst

us are the descendants of men—and women too—who were prepared to suffer, and did in many cases actually incur, fine, imprisonment, and death rather than be without priest and Mass. And, by a process of reaction, love of the Holy Sacrifice of Christ begat in turn the spirit of self-sacrifice for Him, and so produced a Margaret Clitheroe, and many another heroic soul that suffered grievously for the same cause. These confessors and martyrs, or 'witnesses,' to the value of Holy Mass were but the natural product of previous centuries of pre-Reformation Catholic faith. The supply of 'morrow' or 'Jesu' Masses, furnished daily in towns and cities, and celebrated at four, five, and six o'clock a.m., eloquently testified to the fervent demand of the working classes for this best of all morning prayers. Nor was the desire for Mass confined to those who were free to satisfy it. An outdoor 'sacring bell' (at the elevation) would be rung in order that those already preoccupied with necessary work might do homage to each fresh advent to His altar of the Adorable Victim.

In thus seeming to reflect upon present eagerness for Mass it would, however, be less than fair to ignore the vast changes in social life which divide our days from pre-Reformation ones, and more especially from the days of cruel persecution that followed. These last were not, for adherents to Old England's faith, times of much feasting, dancing, and amusement carried far into the night and small hours of the morning. Yet much

'Where
there's
a will.'

of this may in a genuine sense be necessary nowadays, in the actual state of society. But much of it is not, except as an acquired taste for perennial change, rush, and excitement. The true lover of Holy Mass will find means to draw the line somewhere, so as to give week-day Mass a chance. As for those who carelessly neglect the Holy Sacrifice, except when binding under pain of sin, out of pure laziness and indifference, perhaps while it is being daily offered within a stone's-throw—well, let us say nothing on our own part, but simply appeal to their own stray moments of serious reflection, and ask them what *they* honestly think of themselves.

If they are not impressed by their primary duty of adoring the God who made them, and acknowledging *worthily*, through the Divine Victim and Mediator Jesus Christ, their subjection to their Maker, at all events they are sinners, or, if they deny it, St. John¹ tells them they are self-deceivers and void of truth. At least, they have blessings to be thankful for, except they be of the class who forget all that they have from God's bounty in querulous murmurings over what they have not. Even so, they have small cause to wonder why their own poor distracted prayers at home fail to obtain the missing favours, while they take no part in the perfect prayer of Sacrifice offered daily by our Lord within easy distance of their doors.

The
impede .

Those to whom attendance at Mass would involve heroic sacrifices may obtain help in all their

¹ 1 St. John i. 8.

needs by fidelity to the duties of their state in a spirit of union with the Holy Family, and by their other prayers. But it is to be doubted whether the idle and indifferent will do so as long as they wantonly neglect the sacrificial pleading of Him Whom the Father always hears.¹ It is not a case of *sin*, of course, but of a well-deserved forfeiture of Divine favours which they would otherwise secure.

Some Catholic theologians discuss the question whether a person gains more benefit by having a Mass said exclusively for his intentions in his absence or by *attending* an ordinary Mass—a problem to which, perhaps, no sure solution can be given. But the mere fact that such a point should be mooted shows the great value attached by theology to personal presence at the Holy Sacrifice.

If we truly believe that our Saviour, True God and True Man, is actually there upon the altar as our Eldest Brother and Advocate, pleading with all the zeal of His Sacred Heart for us to the Father by the merits of His bitter Passion and Death, and that, in order to do this, He has taken in the Eucharist a further step in self-abasement for our sakes, it is strange and unintelligible that any Catholic should let pass unheeded innumerable chances of showing his or her practical gratitude for so much Divine love and unspeakable condescension. Does not such and similar inconsistency give a handle to the non-Catholic for saying, ‘Well, if you really believe all that, I cannot understand your conduct. You allege that

Spirit of
faith.

¹ St. John xi. 42.

your Church does not oblige you to hear Mass, except on certain days. But the wonder is that your own appreciation of truths should not impel you to go far beyond your strict duty'?

The fruits
of Mass.

It may not be of much practical use to give a technical enumeration of the different kinds of spiritual 'fruits' to be derived from Mass, such as theological text-books describe. These may be found elsewhere. Enough that this glorious tree, standing in the very centre of the Church's paradise, is so laden and bent earthward by its produce as almost to press the rich and varied fruits into our very hands. There are fruits for all concerned in its celebration, even for those reasonably absent—at least, as included in the Church at large, in whose name the priest offers it. Then there are those other less direct fruits which come to the world—even to the world that knows not, or abuses, the Mass—through the graces received by those who value it and use it. How many heroic enterprises of corporal and spiritual charity; how many resolves to restrain passions that threaten other souls; how many graces of reconciliation between enemies have fallen upon mankind from the branches of this tree, watered by the Blood of Jesus, spreading comfort, innocence, and peace around! Or, to adopt the figure of an abler person, how rich and how abundant is 'the harvest of the Mass.'¹

¹ See the exceptionally beautiful discourses on the Mass contained in 'Our Saviour Jesus Christ,' by the Right Rev. Dr. Hedley, O.S.B.

This will be a suitable place to ask in what way Mass effects the remission of mortal sin.

Remis-
sion of sin
through
Mass

Suppose that a person who is, unfortunately, living in mortal sin assists at Holy Mass, how can the Sacrifice affect his spiritual condition?

Not certainly by directly remitting his sin, as Baptism or Confession would. He does not leave the Church freed from sin just because he has heard Mass.

Yet our Lord's Sacrifice *indirectly* brings about remission of sin, inasmuch as it is a most efficacious means of obtaining for the sinner the grace to repent and amend. The idea that Mass is not for such as I am—if in sin—is a most perverse idea, and it may even prove a fatal one. Just *because* I have incurred the wrath of God I need to shield myself behind my Eldest Brother, Whose all-atoning merits have a limitless power of warding off the anger of His Father. The Mass is my one great hope: the altar of sacrifice my surest 'sanctuary' of refuge. As long as Mass is clung to by an erring Catholic, one need never despair of his conversion.

Participation in Holy Mass is the exclusive heritage of the Catholic—the chief privilege of his membership with the 'One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church' of the Nicene Creed. He loses this privilege by excommunication. To put it another way, the Catholic alone has a *right* in the Mass, for his spiritual good in life, and for his good estate after death. If others presumed to be in good faith, but deceased out of *visible communion*

Privilege
of the
Catholic.

with the Catholic Church, are benefited by it, the benefit can only accrue to such *indirectly* through the exercise of his own right by one who is a visible member of the Church. It sometimes scandalizes non-Catholics that a Catholic priest should refuse to celebrate a *Requiem* Mass publicly for the soul of some distinguished or even royal personage who has died in manifest non-communion, and who in life perhaps regarded Mass as a piece of Popish superstition.

How curiously devout to the holy souls in Purgatory even a secular press can become when an occasion offers itself for girding at the See of Peter! Perhaps people are honestly unconscious of the humour shown by such complaints. Yet they would smile at the utterance of such a truism as this—that a gentleman must first formally belong to a Piccadilly Club before he can claim its highest privileges of membership, and that any advantage he can hope to gain from the institution can only come to him through the friendly medium of one who has a member's right, and subject to the club rules and regulations in such matters. The analogy would seem to be fairly exact, although the privilege at stake in suffrages for departed souls bears a far more sacred character, and hence requires a far more serious treatment.

The Mass
and non-
Catholics:
principles,
1. Private
prayer
for non-
Catholics.

To enter now into one or two practical details concerning non-Catholics and the Mass:

1. There is no law, Divine or ecclesiastical, against *private* prayer on the part of Catholics for *anyone*—even those solemnly excommunicated by

name; still less, of course, against praying for non-Catholic, agnostic, or atheistic relatives, living or dead. There is not a priest who would not encourage and advise such prayer, since it is false that Catholics are 'bound by their Church' to believe all those to be eternally lost who die out of visible communion with the Roman See. The Church claims to have no revelation concerning the damnation of any single soul, unless the words of Christ concerning Judas plainly determine his particular case.¹

2. As regards *public* prayer by the Church for individual non-Catholics in her liturgy, that amount of official recognition of non-members is not countenanced, although public prayer may be, and is, offered (*e.g.*, on Good Friday morning) for those outside the Church generally, and even for those who reject Christianity altogether—as, for example, Jews and Pagans. The excellent practice amongst us of praying in Church for the Sovereign and Royal Family occurs outside the liturgy of the Mass, and, moreover, the prayer is offered for them in regard of their public capacity as rulers of the State, and not in their private capacity as *individuals*.

2. Official recognition impossible.

In the case of the dead, prayers may not be *announced publicly* in Church for persons who have departed this life without giving any sign before death of even a wish for membership with the Catholic Church.

3. But there always remains, both to priest and to

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 24.

3. My
right as a
Catholic.

lay Catholic, his own inalienable right as a member of the Church to the use of Mass for *his own* intention ; and the layman arranging for a Mass may either say what his intention is, or may, if he so please, keep it to himself, and lawfully direct it towards the repose of the soul of a non-Catholic. Still more may he lawfully procure a Mass for the conversion of any living person whatever, whether to the faith or to a good life. The point to notice throughout is that in none of these cases is any *right* on the non-Catholic's side to a share in the Sacrifice of the Catholic Church either recognized by the Church or acted upon. The benefit which the outsider (*i.e.*, as regards visible membership) may obtain is secured indirectly through the private use which a true member makes of *his* right, and not directly, nor with any official recognition on the Church's part.

Quite
equitable.

In this matter it may be seen that the *outward* attitude of the Church tallies exactly with the *outward* position of the non-Catholic, while the private action adopted by his Catholic well-wisher in virtue of his individual right does full justice to any interior good faith and virtual union with 'the soul' of the Church, as it is called. In the case of a departed non-Catholic soul, it is only under the supposition that his external separation from the Church was due to honest ignorance of her claim to be the only true one that he is capable of any benefit at all.¹ For a man whose conscience

¹ The above may help a non-Catholic to a better understanding of the phrase, in the Creed of Pope Pius IV., 'out

warns him as to the necessity before God of full communion with the See of Rome wilfully disobeys it in a grave matter, and thereby puts himself into a state of reprobation ; and in that fixed state after death no number of prayers and Masses can avail him.

of which [*i.e.*, communion with Rome] no one can be saved.' The Creed was originally drawn up, after the Council of Trent, mainly for reconciling those who had apostatized from the faith of Rome, and who were naturally supposed to have known what they were doing, whereas our Protestant fellow-countrymen have never learnt that faith. They have been taught distortions of it from childhood, and ever since have been engaged (quite reasonably) in decrying their own unconscious caricature of the same. The teaching of Pius IV. remains true. There *is* no salvation for those who belong not *in any way* to the Catholic Church. But prejudices of education, and the ignorance which these keep alive, open up for our fellow-citizens larger possibilities of good faith and of other dispositions needed for salvation, and hence of that kind of union with the true Church that is called 'belonging to her soul,' though not to her outward body. In short, belonging to 'the soul' of the true Church may be taken as equivalent to being in 'the state of grace,' which necessarily engrafts us in an unseen manner upon the True Vine, which is Christ, the Supreme and Invisible Head of the Catholic Church.

No. XXIV.

ON HEARING MASS.

THERE is absolutely no fixed form of mental or vocal prayer prescribed for those assisting at the Holy Sacrifice. As far as concerns vocal prayer, this follows naturally from the fact that Mass is not a 'service' in the modern and popular acceptation of the term.

Mass
not a
'service.'

No averagely instructed Catholic will say, at his return from church on a Sunday morning, 'I've been to service,' but, 'I've been to Mass.' The term 'service'—though *susceptible* of a meaning suitable to Mass—usually signifies amongst us a public form of prayer (with singing or without) gone through in church, the presence at which of a *quorum* of worshippers, forms its very *raison d'être*. Those assisting are usually expected to take an active, alternative part with the minister officiating, and so contribute to the completeness of the rite itself. If, at the time appointed for worship, the minister found that not even the 'one old woman pew-opener' were present, he would feel that his functions were somewhat out of place, except, perhaps, as an act of his own private devotion, or as a compliance with the obligation attached to his benefice.

With us Catholics Mass is an *objective event* in progress before us, having its full, intrinsic worth and completeness quite independently of our attendance at it. If no one be present, it is not the Mass that is shorn of its perfection, but the absentees who miss a benefit, and fail to join in the perfect act of homage to Divine Majesty. It is the sacrificial act of Christ, by which I profit if I join myself to it.

Beyond a rational presence and a substantially attentive mind, nothing else is needed for attending Mass with some spiritual profit, or for fulfilment of bare obligation on Sundays and holy-days, although devotional effort on our part is most desirable.

These principles explain—what I have elsewhere mentioned—namely, the phenomenon that sometimes needlessly scandalizes visitors to the Continent, where many may be seen without Prayer Book or Rosary, and, besides, give no clear signs of secret prayer. I am not saying that—supposing these appearances to be reliable—a more active piety would not be far better, or is not to be strongly recommended to all. All I mean is that it at least betokens a sense of the unique character of the Mass and its grace-giving value, quite apart from any special personal piety on the part of the worshippers. In this the Mass essentially differs from what we sometimes—and non-Catholics commonly—call a ‘service.’

Allied to this question is that of the use of Latin (or some other non-vernacular tongue) in

Rational
attend-
ance.

Scandal
unduly
taken.

Use of
Latin.

the liturgical rite enacted.¹ A modern writer has compared Latin, as used in the liturgy of Western Christendom, to a piece of amber which contains hermetically enclosed in it the body of a fly, preserving the same from corruption. So a 'dead' language in Catholic Rites preserves the truths or Divine revelation embodied in the liturgy from change and corruption. For, since languages that are in daily use among nations suffer in course of time certain alterations in the meaning and force of their words, their employment, where doctrines are concerned, might lead in course of time to misstatement of dogmas.

Objection. The Reformation introduced the notion that all religious rites must be couched in a tongue 'understood of the people.' This was a logical sequence to its denial of the Mass, and the substitution of a 'service.' And our non-Catholic fellow-countrymen, in decrying our use of Latin, do but maintain the old Protestant tradition.

Objection met But the tradition assumes that the faithful cannot follow intelligently what is going forward in the sanctuary unless they are sufficiently educated to understand the liturgical language used, which, of course, the less educated do not. This assumption, however, is a fallacy.

The Catholic understands. For (1) the averagely instructed Catholic assisting at Mass knows full well the nature of the great Sacrifice that is going forward, and that is amply sufficient, as experience proves, as a

¹ 'Why in Latin?' by Father Bamfield, St. Andrew's, Barnet.

groundwork for highly intelligent and most devout attendance, even on the part of the most illiterate worshipper. (2) Then, after all, there are such things as books in the mother-tongue, in which the liturgy is translated word for word, and often placed side by side with the Latin!

English
translations.

(3) Where is the peculiar advantage of the vernacular plan, say, to a Catholic Englishman, especially in our days of widespread travel? If he go to France, or to Spain, to Japan or to China, and the Mass be also said in the languages proper to *those* countries, as the Protestant principle requires, he will find himself as much at sea abroad as (according to our adversaries) he must do at a Mass in England said in Latin. But more so; for if, on the contrary, he hears the same familiar Latin sounds wherever he goes, a sense of 'at-homeness' pervades him. The contention that worship must be paid in the national tongue appears to spring—consciously or not—from a *national* view of the Church of Christ, as opposed to a Catholic and universal view.

The
Catholic
'at home'
every-
where.

Not, indeed, that there *must* be one universal liturgical language throughout the Universal or Catholic Church. As a fact, such is not the case. There are some eight or nine different tongues at present used in Catholic rites with the full approval of Rome—*e.g.*, Greek, Slavonic, Koptic, Armenian, Syrian, etc. But these languages in their liturgical form are not vernacular tongues in daily use, nor liable to the doctrinal drawbacks attached to such.

A miscon-
ception
to be
avoided.

Liturgical
languages
merely
dis-
ciplinary.

Of course, this exclusion of popular languages is purely a point of discipline, and in no way forms part of essential Catholic faith. Rome might make a change to-morrow, if the objections which decided the Council of Trent to forbid the vernacular were judged by the Holy See to hold good no longer. Benedict XIV. maintains that the view of Colbert, Bishop of Rouen, in favour of using the mother-tongue for certain special reasons, was not censured by Trent. The brief of Leo XIII. relating to Saints Cyril and Methodius relates—and the 'Catholic Dictionary' makes the same statement—that Hadrian II. gave these apostolic missionaries leave to use Slavonic vernacular in sacred rites.¹ John VIII. confirmed this permission to St. Methodius. Moreover, Innocent IV. gave a similar leave in 1248 to the bishop of a Slav flock. It is, therefore, not inconceivable that some future Pope might allow a departure from the present practice, however improbable this may appear to us. It may be doubted whether Catholics in England would welcome any such alteration in their own case. A straw may indicate the course of a stream. Perhaps, then, there was some meaning in the 'cheers' which greeted the statement of one of our Bishops at the C.T.S. Brighton Conference (1906) to the effect that the Council of Trent had declined any such alteration.

¹ No evidence, however, of this grant, as far as Hadrian is concerned, appears either in the '*Liber Pontificalis*,' or in the Register of Hadrian.

So the supposed grievance of Latin would appear to be chiefly manufactured for us by our patriotic, but un-Catholic, friends. .

·METHODS FOR HEARING MASS.

On this subject little need be said, except that every one would do well to have *some* method or other, and not leave things to chance and the inspiration of the moment. And the English early morning, before breakfast, is not with many, nor commonly, a favourable time for inspiration. Though attendance at Mass will always bear fruit, that fruit may be indefinitely increased in proportion to our dispositions. To some favoured souls Mass is so very much that they are painfully conscious of a positive void on the days when they have been unable to hear it. It makes all the difference to them in their daily struggles, trials, and temptations. Clearly these are they who make the most of the Holy Sacrifice, and help themselves by definite spiritual effort.

There is no unfitness in mental prayer (meditations or contemplation), nor in reciting the Rosary or an Office. Yet there are specially sacred moments during the August Sacrifice when an express elevation of mind and heart to the Divine Victory seems altogether desirable—say, at the Elevation or at the Communion—of course, if we are to receive it sacramentally, but even if we are not. For this will give us an opportunity for making a Communion of *desire*, or ‘spiritual Communion,’ as it is called.

Method
to be
desired.

Optional
methods.

The
Missal
for a pre-
ference.

If I were pressed to state a preference regarding methods for hearing Mass, my reply to the educated would certainly be: Follow the Mass step by step in the Missal, either the 'Missale Romanum' or a translation of it, such as the ordinary 'Missal' Prayer Book. At all events, this suggestion may prove useful to those who have no settled method of their own. I have already suggested its suitability for those serving at Mass, and who should attend closely to the details of the rite, in order to acquit themselves properly of their privileged office. Few can do this while pursuing their own plans of private devotion.

A true but
under-
valued
privilege.

I said 'privileged' office. For the spirit of the Catholic faith cannot be greatly flourishing in the heart of anyone who regards serving at Mass rather as a 'bore' and trouble to be evaded, if possible, or has to be bribed in one form or another to take so leading a part in that most Divine work, the Mass. The same may be said of those 'who can sing, but won't sing,' in order to help the priest in carrying out the services of the Church in a becoming manner.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

No. XXV.

THE INSTITUTION OF SACRAMENTAL PENANCE.

BAPTISM establishes the unregenerate soul in the grace and favour of God for the first time. If this state of internal righteousness be forfeited afterwards, as it only can be, by *mortal* sin, then the Sacrament of Penance, or 'Confession,' as we call it, fixing instinctively on its least agreeable element, will restore to us the great treasure we have lost. At the font we are clothed with the robe of holiness, purchased by the Precious Blood of our Redeemer, and in Confession, after we have pitifully soiled and rent that comely garment by our sinful folly, absolution, given by the authority and in the name of Christ, purges out the stains, and repairs the ugly rent with fresh jewels of His merits.

Baptism
and
Penance.

The Church, in one of its dogmatic definitions, speaks of this Sacrament as 'a second plank,' thrown by God's compassion to the shipwrecked soul in order to rescue it from drowning. The

Necessity
of Con-
fession.

words of the Council of Trent explaining the necessity of Confession may here be quoted.¹

Council
of Trent.

‘ If all the regenerated had shown their gratitude to God by continually guarding the righteousness received in Baptism from His grace and bounty, there would have been no need that another Sacrament should be instituted beyond Baptism for the remission of sins. But since God is rich in mercy, He “knew our frame,” and supplied a life-giving remedy to those, even, who should afterwards hand themselves over to the slavery of sin and the power of Satan—to wit, the Sacrament of Penance, by which the benefits of Christ’s death are applied to those who have sinned after Baptism. For, penance was in all times necessary unto all men who had stained their souls with deadly sin, that they might obtain grace and righteousness. . . . Whence the prophet says: “Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities, and iniquity shall not be your ruin.”² . . . Moreover, neither was penance a Sacrament previous to the coming of Christ, nor is it so to anyone previous to his Baptism. The Lord, then, ordained the Sacrament of Penance chiefly on the occasion when, after His resurrection, He breathed on His Apostles, saying: “Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.” ’³

Thus, according to this teaching, penance was

¹ Session XIV.

² Ezech. xviii. 30.

³ St. John xx. 22, 23.

always a *necessary* remedy for sin. But Christ raised penance to a Sacrament which required a special Divine gift for its administration, and left it still a *necessity* for *Christians*.

THE POWER OF FORGIVING SINS.

This power of 'loosing and binding' in the matter of sin, which is included in the wider power of binding and loosing generally conferred on all the Apostles,¹ and on Cephas separately in a more signal manner,² contains two functions: (1) That of *forgiving* human sin; (2) that of *withholding* it from pardon.

This alternative use of the power 'of the keys' is important, in view of the contention of Anglicans—put forward, perhaps, to explain the comparatively scanty use of Confession made by the Church of England as a whole—that, though this power has indeed been given, and Confession is lawful and useful, nevertheless its use is not, according to Christ's intention, *obligatory*, but optional. Yet, if only optional, it would follow that the Christian may obtain forgiveness even though he decline to confess. Now this view, with its necessary consequence, might pass—that is, *biblically*—except for the *second* clause of our Saviour's ordinance: '*and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained.*' By assigning this alternative function to His representatives, our Lord plainly puts them in a judicial capacity. They have a choice committed to them of either pardoning or

Power of absolving.

An Anglican error: answer.

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 18.

² St. Matt. xvi. 19.

withholding pardon ; of pronouncing a sentence of acquittal, or the reverse. This discretionary power would be simply nugatory, especially in its function of 'retaining,' if, as the Anglican often maintains, the sinner need not subject himself to it unless he chooses. Again, were the Apostles to determine their course in an arbitrary way, regardless of the case before them ? Clearly not. Then on what principle of reason could they decide in a particular case whether to 'forgive' or to 'retain' the sins ? Common sense replies : Why, according to the sinner's case and dispositions. And how could they have knowledge of either, unless the penitent accused himself of his sins and manifested his dispositions ?

The State, in appointing judges, virtually says to them : 'Those whom you acquit, we hold acquitted ; those whom you do not acquit, we hold condemned.' But of what avail would this judicial power be if offenders might settle their own cases privately and without the intervention of the courts of justice ? And how could it be determined whether the culprit deserved acquittal or condemnation, and what sentence should be passed, unless the features of the crime of which he stood accused were exposed ?

Our Lord's words, therefore, contain an universal *precept* of Confession. The Reformers of the sixteenth century—unlike many of their religious offspring nowadays—felt forced to admit that the words of Christ contained a *command*, and no mere offer or counsel, but, disliking Confession—and,

Confession for all : Reformers.

judging from the lives of many of them, not without reason—maintained that the command referred to preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments—that is to say, those of the Sacraments which they thought fit to approve. This trivial subterfuge was a common expedient with those worthies for eluding all sorts of Gospel texts implying sacerdotal power. Of course, in a true sense, the Word of God may be said to be preached 'unto the remission of sins,' but only indirectly, inasmuch as those who hear it with profit may be moved thereby to repentance. But no one could imagine that the very solemn act of 'breathing,' the gift of the Holy Ghost which that act symbolized, and the extremely plain and simple words attending the act, simply meant: Administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and preach the Gospel. When our Lord meant this, He said so unmistakably: 'Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them' first.¹ No inherent gift, however, being needed for either of the two functions here appointed, but only external authorization for preaching, or urgent necessity for Baptism, He did not breathe upon His Apostles, in this case, nor confer upon them any special internal gift of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, a very exceptional grace of the Divine Spirit must be needed for sharing ministerially in a Divine prerogative so far exceeding human competence as that of forgiving sins committed, not against man, but against the Majesty of God.

¹ St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

That God should give 'such power to man' naturally astounds us, and not least those who wield it, just as it astounded those who witnessed Our Lord's absolution of the palsied man. But, in reality, the wonder, and also its explanation, lies further back, in that marvellous inter-communion of the Divine with the human which form the keynote to the mystery of the Incarnation of God the Son.

A foolish
objection.

The hackneyed objection to the Catholic doctrine concerning absolution from sin, that it is blasphemously presumptuous for any man to pretend to such a power, is but an echo of the pharisaic murmur: 'Who can forgive sins but only God?' It is a shallow objection, for it falsely assumes that a Catholic priest claims to absolve in his own right instead of by a power delegated to him by Christ. For there can be no presumption in exercising a power divinely conferred for use.

Christ
and the
paralytic.

In the Gospel incident already referred to—the bodily and spiritual healing of the palsied sufferer—the envious Pharisees, perceiving in our Saviour nothing more than a man like themselves, cavilled at his words: 'Be of good heart, son; *thy sins are forgiven thee.*' 'He blasphemeth,' they muttered; and St. Luke adds these further words: 'Who can forgive sins but God alone?'¹ Did our Lord remove the scandal they had taken by explaining that, being God besides, He exercised forgiveness formally in virtue of His natural and Divine right? Quite the contrary. He proceeded to

¹ St. Matt. ix. 2-8; St. Luke v. 18-26.

work a marvellous wonder on the poor cripple, 'in order,' as He expressly said, 'that you may know that the Son of *man* hath power on earth to forgive sins.' Thus He prepared the world for the spectacle of man pronouncing pardon on behalf of God, and in virtue of His authority.¹ So, in turn, He sent His Apostles to do the same: 'As the Father sent Me, so I send you.'² He was sent to enlighten man by truth, and to release man from the fetters of sin. The Apostles were given the mission of continuing both these functions, the second as well as the first. If a priest pretended to forgive sins of himself, then indeed would he stand convicted of blasphemous folly too ridiculous to be imputed to any moderately sane being!

¹ Compare with our Lord's treatment of the murmurings against the Blessed Eucharist, p. 87.

² St. John xx. 21.

No. XXVI.

THE PRECEPT OF CONFESSION.

A Divine
ordinance.

THE obligation binding every baptized person to submit all *mortal* sins 'to the keys'—that is to say, to confess them to a priest with a view to forgiveness by absolution—is a *Divine*, and not a human, ordinance—a precept of Christ, not an ecclesiastical institution. The Council of Trent declares those to have departed from the unity of the Catholic faith who maintain the contrary to this.¹

Not made
by the
Church.

Hence it is not open to a Catholic to hold that private Confession to a priest was an ecclesiastical introduction of later date in the history of the Church—a false view, adopted with seeming unanimity by the members of the Anglican Conference known as the 'Fulham Round Table Conference,' at which the various schools of Anglican thought were represented. It would, however, be out of keeping with the scope of these popular Letters to embark upon the subject of the history of private Confession, as distinguished from the well-known *ecclesiastical* institution of public Penance for certain aggravated forms of scandalous sin. That subject belongs more properly to the domain of the

¹ Session XIV., Canon 6.

specialist. Meanwhile it is enough for a believer in the infallibility of the Church to remember, and in these critical days it is increasingly important they *should* remember, that no amount of learned specialism, however commendable within its own sphere, can clearly establish any conclusion which conflicts with the dogmatic definitions of the Catholic Church.

If the processes of the ‘critical science’ appear to lead us to, or persuade us of, any such antagonistic conclusion, then so much the worse for those processes, except as chastening reminders that our created intellect, and the means of knowledge at its disposal, are, after all, both very limited. Specialist learning and ingenuity of argument are poor things at best compared to the assistance of the Holy Ghost—‘the Spirit of Truth’—promised by the Truth Himself to His Catholic Church ‘for ever,’ the twentieth century included.

Critical study and Church authority.

We have quite recently been reminded of this truth in its application to critical research by the grave and even stern words of our Holy Father, Pope Pius X., in his allocution to the newly created Cardinals at the Public Consistory of April 17, 1907. We quote the Papal address somewhat at length on account of its bearing upon present developments of ecclesiastical study, though it is the last paragraph of all which deserves most attention in the present connexion.

Warnings of Pius X.

Referring to the need which the Holy See had of aid in combating the errors of the present day,

the Vicar of Christ said: 'Rebels indeed are they who profess and propagate under deceitful forms monstrous errors in the evolution of dogma, on a return to the pure Gospel, stripped of the explanations of theology, of the definitions of the Councils, of the maxims of ascetics; on emancipation from the Church, but after a new fashion, in such a way as not to be cut off on account of open rebellion, and yet not to give up their convictions through submission. . . . You see, then, Venerable Brethren, whether we . . . have not reason to be afflicted by this attack, which is not one heresy, but the essence and poison of all heresies, and which is of a nature to undermine the foundations of the faith, and to annihilate Christianity. Yes! to annihilate Christianity. For the Sacred Scripture, in the eyes of these modern heretics, has ceased to be the sure point of all the truths of faith, and is no more than a common book. . . . The Church is the lawful interpreter of the Bible, not the Church in subjection to the rules of so-called critical science which dominates theology and enslaves it. . . . And all these, and a thousand other errors, are propagated in pamphlets, reviews, ascetical works, and even in novels, clothed in ambiguous terms and cloudy formulas, in such a way as always to leave escape from certain condemnation, and yet serve to take the unwary in their snares.'¹

Even
Popes
must
confess.

The law of Confession is *universal*. It admits of no exceptions, has no respect of persons. It

¹ Translation from the *Tablet*, April 27, 1907.

binds every member of the Church of Christ, from the lowest to the highest, not excepting its chief and noblest member—its visible Head on earth, the Pope. Our present venerated Holy Father has to humble himself at the feet of his confessor and tell his sins now that he is Pius X. and Supreme Pontiff no less than he did formerly as the humble peasant lad, 'Beppo' Sarto.

With regard to the *frequency* of Confession strictly binding upon Catholics, the law of 'Annual Confession' has already been explained under 'Ecclesiastical Precepts.'¹ We may repeat here briefly that this law begins to bind every child as soon as it has reached the age of reason—on the supposition, however, that *mortal* sin has been committed.

¹ See 'Letters,' First Series, p. 353.

No. XXVII.

[MATTER AND FORM OF THE SACRAMENT.]

THE Sacrament of Penance, like other Sacraments, is said to be composed of *matter* and *form*. But it notably differs from them in one point, as can be seen by comparing it, for example, with Baptism.

Remote
and
proximate
matter,

In Baptism, the sins of the candidate form no part of the sacramental process itself, but are the material upon which the Sacrament works, cleansing them away. In Penance, on the contrary, the sins of which the penitent accuses himself enter, so to say, into the very structure of the Sacrament, and constitute its *remote* 'matter,' and the spiritual acts performed by the penitent with reference to his sins—viz., contrition, confession, and satisfaction—are the *proximate* 'matter.' The *form* of the Sacrament consists of the absolution pronounced by the confessor. Since it belongs to the penitent to supply the *matter* for the Sacrament, we must devote considerable attention to this part of our subject. The absolution and what appertains to it mostly concerns the priest.¹

¹ There can be no use in reviewing theological discussions as to the precise way in which the acts of the penitent enter into the Sacrament, whether as essential *matter* or as essential *conditions*. The subtle points at issue in no way affect a Catholic's obligation or practice of Confession.

REMOTE MATTER, OR THE SINS OF THE PENITENT.

This is divided into two classes—*obligatory* matter and *optional*, or sins that *must* be confessed and sins that *may* be, and suffice for absolution.

Strictly speaking, only clear and deliberate *mortal* sin has *necessarily* to be confessed. Such is the authentic sense in which the Church, guided by ‘the Spirit of truth’ promised to her, interprets the precept of Christ. We are obliged to acknowledge all *mortal* offences committed in life, and to submit them to priestly absolution; and no repentance of heart for them avails us except it virtually include an intention eventually to confess them to a priest.

Necessary
matter.

Venial sins, though we are not bound to confess them, are *sufficient* matter for Confession; and the practice of confessing such lighter faults is universal in the Catholic Church, although they may be remitted by other means.

Lawful
matter.

There are distinct advantages in the practice of Confession, even when not of obligation, which will be appreciated by every intelligent Catholic. (1) Forgiveness is thus more surely obtained even for venial sins; for the Sacrament is specially *ordained* for remitting sin, and, accordingly, has special efficacy for this. (2) Besides the *guilt* of sins, we have to consider also the *temporal* punishment due to them here, or hereafter in Purgatory; and the penitential acts involved in Confession

Use of
confessing
‘venials.’

derive an exceptional power of satisfying the justice of God from the merits of Christ which operate in the Sacrament. (3) Those who, not content with the lower ambition—*i.e.*, just to avoid *mortal* sin—aim at a higher standard of holiness, will find that this bringing themselves to book about lighter offences will greatly help to the correction of the latter, or, at least, will check their further growth. (4) The fuller acquaintance with the spiritual condition of penitents which fuller Confession affords the confessor enables him to give them surer guidance in the spiritual life, just as more intimate knowledge of a patient's constitution aids a physician in his prescriptions. (5) The purity of conscience thus maintained will keep them well prepared for death should it come upon them unexpectedly.

Mortal
sins con-
fessed but
once.

Mortal sin must *always* be confessed. But the same mortal sin need be confessed but *once* in a lifetime—*i.e.*, in the proper dispositions. Accidentally, however, a repetition of a sin may become necessary, but without details—that is, supposing I wish to have the grace of absolution.

Excep-
tion.

Thus, a person who has recently been to Confession, and is free from mortal sin, desires the additional grace of further absolution before Communion. But, on examining his conscience, he discovers nothing but *doubtful venial* sins. Now, absolution cannot be given in the ordinary way except for *certain* sins.

Imper-
fections.

Mere imperfections—*e.g.*, not saying my Rosary in order to finish an interesting novel, not making

a visit to the Blessed Sacrament as I pass a Church when inspired to do so and nothing prevents me—are not sins at all. Nevertheless, this person being keen upon increasing his store of grace against the rainy day of trial or temptation, wants to have the extra grace of the Sacrament. Well, if so, he must accuse himself of some past and *clear* sin (mortal or venial) for which he is sorry. A most general accusation, such as ‘sins of pride,’ ‘sins against charity,’ etc., is quite sufficient for the purpose. This consideration will prevent surprise if a priest should ask the penitent for a sin of the past in circumstances of the kind, in spite of the fact that no sin, once confessed properly, *need* ever be mentioned again. In such cases it is *advisable* to mention a definite *kind* of sin, like in the examples just given, and not merely to say ‘sins of my past life.’¹

This point applies to really scrupulous souls who may have nothing on their consciences except a string of doubts, fears, and fidgets, all of which is uncertain matter. Apart from scruples, those who walk carefully in God’s sight, especially if hard-working and busy people, may, perhaps, occasionally omit their prayers in the hurry of life, experience passing movements of vanity, impatience, temper, and the like, or, as regards more serious temptations, discover nothing except some more or less doubtful weakness in repelling

¹ If, however, we are confessing to our regular ‘Padre,’ who knows all about us, the expression ‘sins of my past life’ may bear a very definite meaning, and be quite adequate.

the evil suggestions and feelings. All such things are *doubtful venial* sins at most, and in such cases some definite *kind* or class of past sin should be added at the end of the list, *but without details*.

A good
practice.

There is a good reason for adopting the practice of expressing sorrow in this general way for past sins in *every* Confession, when the faults committed since the last, although *certain*, are slight, and very customary with us; for it is less easy to conceive a real sorrow and purpose of amendment for small faults that frequently recur. Yet sorrow and purpose are both *essential* for valid absolution in every case. Hence it is advisable to recall graver sins for which we are conscious of being truly repentant; and this, moreover, will save many from misgivings as to whether they were properly sorry.

A diffi-
culty.

An objection to the mention of past sins might here suggest itself. Granted that mortal sin is *necessary* matter for absolution and venial sin *sufficient* matter, how can either *continue* to serve as matter once they have already been pardoned by absolution? There is no impossibility in this; for the *guilt* of the sin can be remitted, and yet the *satisfaction* or *punishment* due on account of the sin may still remain incomplete. And we never know for certain in this world whether our debt in this respect has been wholly paid. The Sacrament of Penance was devised by Christ for people living in this uncertainty.

Con-
fession
not to be
halved.

Mortal sin must be confessed in the *very next Confession* after it has been committed (supposing

we remember it). Saving some rare and exceptional case,¹ we cannot put off telling the sin for a Confession or two—say, till we have a chance of getting to some particular priest, Confession to whom will prove less trying to us. ‘But I don’t want to lose my Communions!’ This is no answer, for you have no right to go to Communion with a deliberately unconfessed mortal sin in the background. Either have it out bravely, or you must put off Communion until you find courage to confess it. You are, of course, perfectly free to seek out Father Benignus instead of Father Severus, and it is far better you should if there be real practical danger of your making an insincere Confession to the latter when you get to him. But you may not confess first to Father S., *leaving out* the mortal sin, and reserving it for Confession later to Father B. That would be making a sacrilegious Confession.

What is to be thought of the following? Example:
 Xystus, who is habitually preserved by God’s A doubtful
 mercy from mortal sins, is accustomed, we will practice.
 suppose, to confess regularly as follows: ‘I don’t remember anything serious since last time. I am sorry for my *uncharitableness* in the past, and ask for absolution.’ He reasons with himself thus: ‘I am not bound to tell *venial* sins. I confess a real sin of the past, for which I am sorry and purpose amendment, and that’s enough for the Sacrament.’ If X. does this, and has the dispositions that he mentions, there can be no doubt that he

¹ See No. XXXIII., p. 297.

fulfils all essential justice, and is fit for absolution. This is granted by grave theologians;¹ indeed, it is difficult to see on what theological ground this could be denied. But is it lawful so to confess from one end of the year to the other? If the penitent supplies all the essentials demanded by his state of conscience—as appears in X.'s statement of his case—the *lawfulness* cannot be disputed. All the same, to confess in this way *habitually* is a most *inadvisable* practice, and a confessor would be fully justified by prudence in trying to elicit a more explicit Confession; for a regular habit of this sort, if persevered in, would probably breed perfunctoriness and carelessness in nine cases out of ten. It may easily spring from lazy neglect of ordinary self-examination, or, in the case of the illiterate, betoken a lax conscience of the consistency of a rhinoceros-hide, that is insensible to the importance of things.

¹ *E.g.*, Dicastillo, A. Ballerini, Bucerone.

No. XXVIII.

FORM OF THE SACRAMENT, AND MINISTER.

THIS topic, as mainly concerning the confessor, will not need any lengthy discussion here.

The *essential* words, though not all that the priest recites, are these: '*I absolve thee from thy sins.*' Absolu-
tion acts
in the
present.

How far is this sentence the priest's own work? In what sense does he contribute to the pardon? Character
of the
sentence. The Church teaches us most positively, as against various heresies, that the sentence of absolution is no mere declaration or 'comfortable assurance' on the priest's part given to the sinner that Christ will pardon him, or has pardoned. The 'I absolve thee,' etc., is no pure *message* from the forgiving Heart of Jesus. The priest is no mere tube or telephone. He contributes *actively* towards forgiveness, though, of course, in a position of subordination to Christ, Whose dependent minister he is. His co-operation with our Lord is intelligent and is free, and, as actually ordained, his co-operation is necessary for the pardon, so that if he does not give absolution, absolution is not received. In a similar way, judges appointed to administer State laws have their own *measure* of authority and discretion, albeit deriving their judicial right

from the authority of the State. They are not mere automatons.¹ This sentence of the spiritual judge is not given *provisionally*—i.e., its effectiveness is not made to depend upon some *future* event, or the *subsequent* fulfilment of some condition. It works its effect at once, or not at all. Suppose that a grave theft were confessed. Here an honest *purpose* to restore ill-gotten goods, when possible, is essential for absolution. But the confessor, confident of that honesty, does not absolve him *provisionally* for the event of his *actually making restitution*. He is restored *there and then* to grace, though, if he go back upon his resolve afterwards, of course he *falls back* again into sin.

Con-
ditional
absolu-
tion.

I am not here speaking of what is known as 'conditional' absolution. That is a very different thing. For instance, in a shipwreck due to col-

¹ In certain Eastern (Catholic) rites the form of words is different, and in them the priest seems simply to be *praying* that the Lord may forgive rather than taking his own ministerial share in the pardon—c.g. : 'Do Thou, O Lord, Thyself remit, remove, forgive the sins of this N., because Thine is the power and Thine the kingdom,' etc. This form is perfectly understood by those who use it, and the penitents applying for it, as not denying the priest's judicial authority under God, but as referring to the obvious *Source* of the sacerdotal power. In a Syrian rite this is still more clear. The confessor addresses the penitent in a long form, saying, amongst other things : ' . . . Behold from this moment God says to thee through me, "Thy sins are pardoned."' None of the Oriental Churches—whether schismatical or in union with Rome—differ from Rome in their estimate as to the active share taken by the priest in effecting the remission of sins.

lision, some priest on board exhorts his fellow-passengers on the sinking vessel to repent of their sins, and then gives them absolution in this form: '*If you are contrite and capable of the Sacrament, I absolve you,*' etc. Here the 'condition,' expressed in the italicized words, is not one that concerns the future, but the *present*—a question of fitness *here and now*. The object of conditional administration of Sacraments is, on the one hand, to avoid flinging these sacred rites about recklessly, and running the risk of their being administered in vain, when there is no means or opportunity for testing the fitness of the candidate; and on the other, to save the risk of grievous injury to the souls of applicants, which might result from absolutely refusing to minister to them, when they really are fit in the sight of God.

For valid absolution, the penitent must be *morally present* to the confessor. Moral presence must be reckoned by common sense, which is only another expression for human opinion and estimation. It will not be easy in every case to decide precisely where moral presence ends and absence begins. But at least it is plain that a person within easy speaking and hearing distance (without artificial aid) may be considered present, and that an enemy's gunner *seen* miles away through a field-glass is, humanly speaking, absent. A penitent who by error left the confessional before the priest had pronounced absolution—as might happen with a deaf person—could be absolved, while still near at hand, without being called back ;

The
absent
not
absolved.

so could a person seen to be falling from the top window of a house quite close at hand.

No absolution by post or wire.

From the need of presence, it follows that absolution cannot be sent by post or by wire, though at least one case of application for such absolution (from an Anglican) has come within the knowledge of the writer. This is true, even though the sins themselves have been confessed in the confessor's presence. An explicit condemnation of the Holy See makes it certain that such absolution would be null and void, for the Holy See has forbidden the practice in all cases. Now, if it were *ever* valid, it would certainly be so in an extreme case of spiritual need—say in sudden illness—where the salvation of a soul seemed to hang in the balance. But in such a case it could not be forbidden, if of any value. For the most part the Sacrament of Penance runs on the main lines of a judicial process—though of a most fatherly kind—in which sentence should be pronounced in the offender's presence.

By telephone? A theorem.

The rather theoretical question has been mooted whether the *telephone* could be used as the means of communication between penitent and confessor for purposes of absolution—that is to say, chiefly from the point of view of *presence*. Could the penitent, using the telephone for Confession, be humanly regarded as *present* to the confessor, and *vice versa*? One standard author deems the practice only lawful in some extreme emergency. He bases this *qualified* condemnation on the fact that Rome, when consulted, replied: 'There is

no answer to be given' (*Nil respondendum*), which probably means: Consult approved theological authors.

But apart from the question of 'moral presence,' there seem to be other and very grave objections, such as danger of violating the seal of secrecy. Those who use telephones may have had the experience of overhearing snatches of conversations in progress between other couples, owing to some accident or defect in the machinery. Moreover, confession by telephone presents possibilities of 'tricks' at the penitent's end not to be contemplated.

MINISTER OF ABSOLUTION.

As I am writing for the laity, little needs to be said on the above head.

Only he who has at least valid *priest's* orders can absolve from sin, and only males are susceptible of them. But, according to long-prevailing discipline, even a validly ordained priest cannot validly *exercise* the function of hearing Confessions without authorization from the Bishop. The *latent* supernatural power to absolve is received together with the Sacrament of Priest's Orders; but it remains, as it were, 'tied up' until set free by higher authority, and has a working sphere allotted to it. Hence I cannot go to Confession to any priest I choose unless he has 'faculties' in the particular diocese in which I want him to absolve me. Just as in the law justices have 'circuits' assigned to them within

Valid
orders
needed.

which they are to try prisoners, so the spiritual judge, or confessor, has a certain area (or class of persons—*e.g.*, nuns) assigned him for the exercise of his function. Thus, for example, English people travelling abroad may wish some English priest whom they meet in their travels to hear their Confession; but he cannot oblige them unless he have ‘faculties’ from the Bishop of that particular region.

Personal
qualities
not
essential.

The value of a priest’s absolution—if he be a real priest—does not depend in any sense upon his personal soundness of faith or goodness, still less—except quite accidentally—upon his learning. Still less is the spiritual efficacy of the Sacrament dependent upon his powers of sympathy or the number of his words to us. Sacraments—let it be repeated again and again—derive their virtue from the Precious Blood, from the *inherent power* imparted to them by Christ, their Author. The spirit of Catholic faith would be decidedly wanting in those who failed to realize this truth, and practically set far greater store upon what the priest says than upon what he has to give. The confessor’s words, however important, consoling, or helpful, are *his*: restoration to grace, or its increase, is primarily our Lord’s.

No. XXIX.

ACTS OF THE PENITENT : CONTRITION.

IT has been pointed out that the *remote* matter of this Sacrament consists of the *sins* of the penitent, and the *proximate* matter of the *penitential acts* performed by him in reference to these sins—viz., contrition, Confession, and satisfaction. These three will now claim in turn our attention.

CONTRITION, OR SORROW FOR SIN.

Contrition is defined by the Council of Trent thus: 'Grief and detestation of sin committed with a resolve not to sin in future.'

Of the three necessary penitential acts above enumerated, contrition is by far the most important, for on it depends true repentance and conversion of heart, and without this true inward change there can obviously be no forgiveness from God. No matter how mathematically exact my enumeration of sins to the confessor may be, it will not avail for pardon unless I truly repent of them in my heart. And this is true of all sin, whether mortal or venial. There must be real *conversion*, which implies two things: that I turn my will away from the evil I have loved, and turn it towards God whom I have postponed to

'Proxi-
mate'
matter.

What is
contri-
tion?

Its
necessity
and im-
portance.

that evil. 'Cast away from you all your transgressions . . . and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit: and why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I desire not the death of him that dieth: return ye, and live.'¹

In thus insisting on the importance of sorrow I do not mean, of course, that the other two penitential processes may be 'scamped,' as having comparatively small importance, but only that if, for example, a person must perforce choose between a somewhat fuller examination of conscience and greater attention to contrition and purpose of amendment, he ought to prefer the latter.

A caution
to the
anxious.

This observation has special point for anxious souls who are prone to overmuch self-searching and introspection about more trifling matters. There is not in such cases, as I am here supposing, any real likelihood that further scrutiny will reveal any fresh *mortal* sin; and yet such people keep at it, and perhaps, in the end, are obliged, for want of time, to hurry over their acts of contrition. That is a want of proportion, and most undesirable.

Character
of true
contri-
tion.

Now we will consider the *nature* of the sorrow for sin that is required. The word 'contrition' is often made to stand for any grade of supernatural sorrow; but, more strictly speaking, when used without qualification, it signifies the highest of three possible grades of sorrow, the other two being more properly called attrition, or imperfect contrition.

¹ Ezech. xviii. 31.

There are three grades of supernatural sorrow for sin, any of which avails for sacramental absolution. Grades of sorrow.

1. *Lowest Grade*.—Sorrow prompted by filial fear of God's judgments—in particular, the eternal punishment of hell. N.B.—The fear must be *filial*—that is to say, not *servile*, which last only means, 'I *would* sin if I dared,' and therefore involves a wish to sin—a wish incompatible with true detestation of sin and repentance. Thus the slave avoids offending his master merely because of the lash which he sees in the master's hand.

2. *Intermediate Grade*.—Sorrow out of consideration for God's bounty and goodness *to me* in the past or present.

The above two grades belong to Attrition, or Imperfect Contrition.

3. *Highest Grade, or 'Perfect' Contrition*.—Sorrow out of consideration of God's goodness in Himself, and for the sake of His perfections, above and beyond the mere consideration of His benefits to me.¹

¹ With regard to the degree in which it is possible for me to abstract from self-interest in loving God, it must be kept in view that the following false doctrinal assertion has been expressly censured by the Holy See: 'There is an habitual state of the love of God that is pure charity, and free from all alloy of interested motives. . . . God is no longer loved with a view to meriting, nor for perfection's sake, nor for the happiness to be found in loving Him' (Denzinger, No. 1193).

From which it is plain that some forms of ascetical expression occasionally to be met with in books, and elsewhere, are well-meaning but exaggerated heroics. I cannot

The *motive* for sorrow in this last and highest grade is love of God for *His own sake*, and *above all else*. I love Him because He is what He is—so holy, so good, so great, and hence so infinitely worthy to be loved before every one and everything, and on this account I grieve to have offended Him.

Illustration.

These three grades of repentance may be illustrated as follows: Three children, A, B, and C, we will suppose, have all misbehaved towards their mothers, and all express their sincere sorrow for the offence.

A says: 'Mother, I am sorry—*don't punish me this time.*'

B says: 'Mother, I am so sorry for being naughty, *after the treat you gave me yesterday.*'

C says: 'Mother, I'm so very sorry, *because you are such a darling mother*, and I love you.'

It is clear that C's dispositions are the best and purest.

All suffice
with Con-
fession.

Now, *any one* of the aforesaid grades will suffice for pardon, *coupled with Confession*, but only the *highest* will avail *without* it. Thus, a person dying in a railway disaster, and conscious of mortal sin, will not save his soul by sorrow based, for example, on fear of hell. Yet we may trust that the great goodness of God would enable one so placed to make an act of perfect contrition.

alter the fact that God is my supreme good, nor could I well love God as good in Himself except I also considered Him as good to me. It is God only Who can love without any intrinsic profit to Himself.

But this will not justify us in living lives of sin and relying upon some exceptional grace of perfect contrition in the event of being surprised by death. That would be playing fast and loose with Almighty God, and 'God is not mocked.' Few priests have lacked painful experiences of such fatal rashness. True, we can never safely affirm that any soul has actually suffered the penalty of its practical mockery of God, however convincing the terrible appearances—so immense is the Divine mercy. So let us put it thus: It behoves us to guard against the verification of such appearances of final impenitence in our own case, and to live in the holy fear *and* love of God. If we should sin grievously, let us remember 'we have an Advocate,' and hasten to get His atoning merits applied to us by the Sacrament of Penance.

What an inestimable mercy of the Saviour's loving Heart Confession is—yes! in spite of the ordeal to which it puts our human pride. Although our sorrow lacks perfection, our compassionate High Priest supplies the shortage with His Heart's Blood, and admits us to His love and friendship, which our very misery has forced us once more to seek. Would any other human friend do the like upon the same easy terms? Many a ruined, hopeless soul in our slum-dens of iniquity would hope again did it but know this 'gift of God,' this astounding moral miracle, by which a whole life of sin and degradation may be clean wiped out by only one more brief space of self-humiliation, endured in sympathetic secrecy, and by six brief

Caution
not to
presume.

Con-
fession a
great
mercy.

words of tender forgiveness from the unreproachful lips of a Catholic priest. Surely any reluctance we may feel to the short trial involved in candid Confession should be replaced by intense thankfulness to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 'Who redeemeth thy life from destruction . . . Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion . . . Who healeth all thy diseases . . . for behold, thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.'¹

Sorrow
aroused
by the
Passion.

It may be asked, Under what grade should we class sorrow for sin prompted by the thought of the bitter sufferings and death endured by Christ for those very sins which we are about to confess? This will depend upon the exact direction which such sorrow takes. If I look chiefly or solely to *the benefit which accrues to myself* from the Passion of our Lord, the sorrow will not rise above the *second* grade. But if I deplore those atoning sufferings *as evils for Him*, I seem to attain to the highest grade. And perhaps one is more easily raised to perfect contrition by such meditations than by pondering over any other truth of faith. So striking an outward proof of God's goodness *to me* easily leads me on to the reflection: If God could suffer such torments and unspeakable outrages, knowing all the time how ill I should repay His self-sacrificing love, then what an infinitely good God He must be *in Himself*! Thus the adorable perfections of our Lord, manifested so signally in His Sacred Passion, begin to

¹ Ps. cii., a suitable act of thanksgiving after Confession or Communion.

push thoughts of self into the background. Similarly, the intense pleasure which I may derive from viewing some great painter's masterpiece soon carries me on to admiration and esteem for the skilled *maestro* himself.

A little quiet reflection before some appealing crucifix, while preparing for Confession, is probably the most efficacious means for arousing the soul to perfect contrition for its sins.¹ Let those who despair of such perfection try the expedient suggested. They are likely to receive an agreeable surprise.

Sure way
to con-
trition.

¹ Especially in the case of sins of hatred and revenge (see 'Letters,' First Series, p. 223).

No. XXX.

CONTRITION.

QUALITIES OF SORROW REQUIRED.

THE chief qualities that must distinguish our sorrow for sin are these: Our sorrow must be (1) *universal* (for *mortal* sins); (2) *supernatural*; (3) *sincere*—(a) as regards the sins committed, (b) as to our resolve, with the help of God, not to repeat them in the future.

These qualities need some little explanation.

Uni-
versality.

I. *Universal*.—Our sorrow must extend to *all mortal* sins committed without exception. Since it is the nature of each individual mortal sin to deprive us of God's friendship, we cannot regain the latter if unrepentant for any single *mortal* sin. There is, however, no need to recall every mortal sin of the *past* that has been confessed and is done with. Still less need we imagine to ourselves all *possible* mortal sins in order to exercise our contrition upon them all. For sorrow can only exist for sins really committed, and in a given Confession we need only concern ourselves with those of which we have been guilty since our last absolution. In this point of *universality* our sorrow differs from our purpose of amendment, of which presently.

2. *Supernatural*.—The motive which leads us to be sorry—the *reason why* we are sorry—must be ‘supernatural,’ which means ‘above nature’—that is to say, our sorrow must not spring from some purely human consideration, but from some religious truth taught us by our faith, and hence in some sense connected *with God*, Who is the person offended. A drunkard, for instance, may be very sorry for his fault because, while in liquor, he lost his purse, or made a fool of himself. That is *his* affair : it has nothing to do with God, with the next world, or the Christian faith. I should not expect a neighbour’s pardon if, after assaulting him with my fists, I expressed deep regret to him for the deed because, forsooth, I had hurt my knuckles over the business !

Super-
natural
motive.

The principle here laid down may seem self-evident, but it deserves attention for its importance. For, some forms of sin bring their own natural, and often heavy, punishment with them, quite apart from positive punishments that God may please to inflict here or hereafter. And when the offender feels these bitter consequences of sin weighing heavily upon him, and causing shame and remorse, he is apt to be far more sorry *for himself* than for having offended God. When this occurs, some care is needed in order to ensure proper *supernatural* dispositions. It is possible, of course, to view the natural retribution for violating God’s law in the light of faith, as coming ultimately from the chastising hand of our Heavenly Father ; and, if so regarded, the sufferings we

undergo need not at all conflict with supernatural sorrow, but may rather help it out and increase it.

Sincerity
(a) of
detesta-
tion.

3. *Sincere*.—(a) For sincere sorrow, there must be *detestation* of the sin—*aversion* from it, at all events in the higher and intellectual part of our being. Sensible grief, or *feeling* of sorrow and tears, are not *essential*. On the other hand, a mere *regretful wish* that we had not fallen is not enough—this being hardly distinguishable from *remorse* of conscience or self-reproach, which, in all but hardened sinners, inevitably attends conscious wrong-doing. Even Judas had this: ‘I have sinned, betraying innocent blood.’ My sorrow must be an *active* one, as distinguished from the mere sense of regret or shame which may exist even in a soul that has no intention of seeking pardon. Moreover, as the Church teaches, it must be brightened by ‘hope of pardon.’

‘Feelings’
not
essential.

It has been said that *sensible* sorrow, or sorrow *of feelings*, is not an essential test of sincerity. Few truths are more important in the spiritual life than that we serve God with our spiritual *wills*, and not with *feelings*. No doubt this *sense* of grief is a comfort and a help—nay, it may even be a special grace. The Roman Missal gives a set of prayers ‘for obtaining the gift of tears.’ Tears of contrition, such as furrowed St. Peter’s cheeks, are not to be despised, and still less considered unmanly. All the same, grief is sometimes more intense and *lasting* in those who do not exhibit, and perhaps are so constituted as to be incapable of exhibiting, outward signs of it. We remember

the lines about the dead warrior's tearless widow :

‘ She must weep, or she must die.’

But how is it, one may ask, that, though I know and firmly believe sin to be really far more evil than any temporal loss or affliction, so that I may not commit the smallest venial sin in order to avert the most terrible earthly disaster, yet I shed no tears over mortal sins, whereas I certainly should over the death of some dear relative? Does not this fact prove beyond doubt that my contrition for sin is sham? No, it proves nothing of the kind!

Objection.

There are two fair explanations for this apparent contradiction. First of all, God and His Divine friendship is not an object known to our *senses*, and therefore does not affect them directly. We only know Him through the intellect and in the light of *faith*. The evil of sinning against Him, again, is only perceived by the same method, and, in many of its forms, sin does not substantially impair our everyday external well-being, whereas the void caused in our daily life by the loss of a friend, the pain of poverty, or sickness, or loss of fortune, besides causing inward sorrow, appeal strongly to our senses, and seriously affect the material, sensitive portion of our being. If it is friendship betrayed that afflicts us, this appeals quite as much to the emotional side of us as it does to our intellectual appreciation of wrong, and drags from us an outward response in signs of

Answer.

trouble and in tears. Quite true, we read that Saints have fainted with grief and horror at small sins, as is told of St. Aloysius at the feet of his confessor. But that was a special grace, and we must not consider it as a necessary condition of sincere sorrow. If we had the light, granted to him, to realize more vividly how very bad *any* sin really is, we might experience something similar.

Contri-
tion of
will
higher
than
'feelings.'

Another explanation of the puzzle is this: Our sorrow for sin, though less *sensibly* and *outwardly* intense, nevertheless stands in our minds upon a far higher plane than grief under temporal afflictions. Suppose that while I am preparing for Confession some one pulls my sleeve, and asks me, as a speculative problem, 'Which is more deplorable—to outrage the infinite Majesty and holiness of God, and incur His enmity by mortal sin, or to be parted (for a time) by death from a loved one?' I should not doubt for one moment how to reply: 'Why, of course, *there is no comparison*. The offence of God is indefinitely the greater misfortune.' And yet, if the temporal loss occurred, I should be far more upset in my feelings. Now, this shows that our detestation of sin is of a distinct order, and stands on a far higher plane. The evil of sin stands in our *intellectual appreciation* as paramount over all other evils. But our lower nature is hard, and with difficulty suffers the truths of faith residing in our upper nature to filter through and permeate it. On the contrary, at times it even forces its muddy waters upward

into the higher and nobler regions of the soul, and carries away our principles in the flood.

Hence it is that theologians and spiritual writers strongly caution us against the experiment of testing in advance our fidelity to principles of faith by picturing to our imaginations certain exceptional trials to human constancy, such as torture or martyrdom, and then challenging our hearts with the question, 'Would you bear *that* rather than offend God?' Even some of those heroic souls who actually endured such trials unflinchingly, *when God's time arrived and the necessary grace came with it*, might have sinned mentally had they forestalled the future by such utterly rash self-questioning.

SORROW FOR VENIAL SIN.

No less than in the case of mortal sin, our sorrow for *venial* sin must be *sincere* and based upon a *supernatural* or religious motive. But sorrow for venial sin need not possess the other quality mentioned. It need not be *universal*; that is to say, that although, of course, *every* sin must be repented of in order to be pardoned, yet in the case of *venial* sins, one sin may be forgiven while another, for which we do not repent, is not.

The reason is this: *Each mortal sin* unrepented of is, as we saw, incompatible with God's pardon and the state of grace. Hence our sorrow for our *mortal* sins cannot be *halved*. When confessing several mortal sins we are either sorry for all and each, or we are not, and so are either for-

A danger
to be
avoided.

A differ-
ence.

Differ-
ence
explained.

given them all or *none*. In their case, therefore, our sorrow must be *universal* and extend to every one. It is otherwise with *venial* sin. No venial sin, no number of venial sins, however large, affects our state of friendship with God. For God's friendship depends upon our being in the state of grace, and the *degree* of His friendship upon the *amount* of sanctifying grace we have so far accumulated. Thus, if I have confessed three venial sins, X, Y, and Z, being sorry for X and Y, but not for Z, X and Y are forgiven by absolution, Z is not; but the state of friendship with God is not thereby at all impaired. Nay, the fresh grace of absolution for X and Y *increases* it. Sin Z remains untouched.

Not to be practised.

Some theologians of weight maintain it as *speculatively* probable that, in the case of *venial* sin, the mere *aversion* to such sins, which is implied by the *simple fact* of our *confessing them at all*, constitutes sufficient *detestation* for purposes of forgiveness. But whereas a 'probable' opinion, as well supported as this one, would suffice in *practice* with regard to some other matters, it may *not* be acted on here, because the *validity* of a Sacrament is at stake, and knowingly to endanger that validity would be sacrilege. In such a matter *safe* courses must be followed.

The main use of this wholly impracticable theory is to enforce the wide difference between venial and mortal sin—a thought which may console the anxious, but need not be employed by the careless for toughening consciences which are

already sufficiently hardy. We must never forget that venial sin is always a *sin*—an offence against the Infinite Majesty of God. It should never be treated as a ‘bagatelle.’

The following degrees of sorrow and purpose regarding *venial* sins are practically lawful in Confession, though clearly not the highest and best :¹

Lawful forms of sorrow for ‘venials.’

1. *Sorrow* for their *quantity* and firm purpose to diminish it, without necessarily fixing the mind expressly on any *particular* fault.

2. One may have sorrow for one venial sin, *e.g.*, of lying without therefore including all lies committed, and similarly with regard to the purpose of amendment.

3. Though the Church has *defined*² that no one can keep absolutely free from *venial* sin except in virtue of a special privilege like that granted to our Lady, we are nevertheless *allowed* to make a purpose against *all* venial sin, subject, however, to the mental proviso, ‘as far as in me lies.’ This proviso is not merely an equivalent to ‘with God’s help,’ for that help is also needed for avoiding *mortal* sin, but ‘as far as it shall prove morally possible to human weakness *with* God’s grace.’ The definition referred to means that, in spite of our will being free and the grace of God being at our disposal for the asking, *as a matter of fact* a man *will* commit some venial sin, owing to the extreme difficulty of *always* corresponding with God’s grace in venial matters. This practical im-

¹ Génicot, vol. ii., p. 299.

² Council of Trent, Session VI., Can. 23 ; Denz., No. 715.

possibility, however, of avoiding *all* venial sins in our lives, refers, no doubt, chiefly to semi-deliberate venial sins, due to surprise or sudden provocation, not to fully deliberate and cold-blooded venial offences, which, with prayer and grace, we can and ought to correct.

A practical suggestion.

Those who find themselves equal to making a true purpose against venial sin, and who confess *nothing* else, will do well to single out a *few* such sins for Confession—the more wilful ones—instead of giving a long and confused list of all their semi-deliberate faults and many imperfections. As for mere *imperfections* (*i.e.*, not sins), they have no meaning in Confession, which is for *sin*, except, perhaps, upon occasion when needed—*e.g.*, for enabling the confessor to give guidance concerning the penitent's whole spiritual life and conduct.

Sincerity
(b) of proposed
amendment.

(b) *Purpose of Amendment*.—Let us begin with an illustration. We sometimes see boys practising the 'high jump' over a horizontal lath resting lightly upon pegs, which can be moved up hole by hole on two vertical posts, placed some feet apart. When the lath is fixed at about 3 feet 6 inches, the jump becomes serious, and the athletic chaff soon gets sifted from the wheat. Johnnie tries the jump, but fails. Returning to the starting-point, he nerves himself for a second attempt, but fails again. Undaunted, he returns to the starting-point. Allowing himself a longer run, with feet firmly planted, fists clenched, and a look of determination on his countenance, he tries once more, but once more he displaces the lath.

But he tries yet a fourth time, and lo! he clears the lath amidst the applause of his companions.

Now, the main point to be noticed in this example is that, even when he actually and repeatedly *failed*, Johnnie evidently had a true purpose of amendment. Perhaps, at first, he lacked that full intensity of effort which ultimately secured success. But still, all through his purpose was firm; his whole demeanour showed it. Applica-
tion.

This illustrates the correct notion of a true purpose of amendment in the matter of avoiding sin in future, and shows that it lies between two false extremes. What a
true
purpose
is not. (1) It does *not* mean that we *feel sure*, or *know*, that we shall *never so offend again*. If this surety were needed, how could, *e.g.*, a confirmed drunkard, who, roused by a mission, makes a very full and careful Confession, and really tries to take a fresh start—how could such a one *help* fearing lest weakness should cause him to relapse again later? Except for a sort of moral miracle, it is likely he will have some further falls before he gains complete mastery over his inveterate habit. Johnnie, after more than once failing to achieve his jump, could not but have *feared* yet another failure. (2) The opposite false extreme would be to confuse a true purpose with a *mere wish to be good*. This is no more a true *resolve* than mere *regret* at having sinned is true sorrow. We all *wish* to be good, and would be, but that we shrink from the trouble involved in realizing the wish. Such wishes are mere *velleities*, inefficacious wishes which do not suffice to bring men to the point of

taking the *necessary means* for true repentance. Every soul now eternally lost has probably had them—those ‘good intentions’ which are said to pave their place of endless punishment.

Johnnie certainly did not content himself with a *wish* to clear the lath; he tried every means he knew.

What
true pur-
pose is.

The true purpose lies between these extremes. It is like this. *Here and now* I am determined to do my best to avoid the repetition of my sin. I have grave misgivings as to my strength of will to persevere. Perhaps I have, in my past experience, ample grounds for fearing my own weakness. But while afraid of myself, I put full trust in the grace of God that it will support my good-will and grant me the victory. As for what may happen later, when, perhaps, I shall have weakly relaxed in my prayers and my vigilance against occasions of sin, I know nothing, and can prophesy nothing. True, I *may* fall, though I have no intention of doing so. On the contrary, I sincerely mean and resolve *not* to do so. Of course, there must be no secret *intention* of taking a sinful holiday later—say, at Christmas or New Year, or during my summer holiday.

Example

A tale is told of a murderous domestic quarrel in some ‘Paradise Street’ of one of our city slums, in which Mrs. O. seems to have been the aggressor. The priest was summoned to lay the matrimonial storm. Being Saturday, he succeeded in persuading the chief offender to come to Confession that evening and make her ‘duties.’ So,

turning to her husband, Mrs. O. called out : ‘ Do you hear, Pat ? I’ve promised the priest of God to go to the Sacraments this blessed night, and I freely forgive you. But just you wait *till Monday morning !*’ This last reserve promised ill for a *true purpose*, since it distinctly provided for a speedy resumption of hammer and tongs. Whatever our fears of relapse, of course there must be no intention to return to our sin.

Our forecast of the difficulties and struggles to be met with in carrying out our good resolves is apt to be monstrously exaggerated by our lively imaginations and fears. How often have we not verified in our own case that which the Holy Women experienced at the Sepulchre when searching for the crucified body of their beloved Master : ‘ Who shall roll us back the stone ?’ And lo and behold ! ‘ looking, they saw the stone rolled back, for it was very great.’¹ Imagin-
ary fears.

A little more courage—above all, a *blinder* confidence in our Lord’s goodness and mighty help, entertained exactly in proportion to that sense of the stone’s size and weight which our miserable weakness engenders in our hearts, and on coming up to the difficulty which would separate us from the love of Christ, lo and behold ! we shall find that Divine pity has preceded us, and rolled it back by providential arrangement or by exceptional graces.² The stone
rolled
back.

¹ St. Mark xvi. 3, 4.

² ‘ God either removes the inclination to sin when the occasion is present, or takes away the occasion when the inclination is there ’ (St. Augustine).

Our imagination is a first-class liar. It cannot help itself; it was made for the purpose of conjuring up what is not. And if mine be a rather lively one, I may be certain that the Father of Lies will make liberal use of it to scare me out of making my purpose of amendment.

Purpose
to be
universal.

My purpose of amendment must be *universal*, which means that I must resolve not to commit *any* mortal sins, either those now to be confessed or any others. But as to these 'others,' I must carefully follow the warning of theologians mentioned above, about not conjuring up in detail possible occasions of sin on the plea of testing my firmness.

Avoid-
ance of
'occa-
sions.'

The last quality of a true purpose of amendment is that it be *efficacious*; it must include the will to take all *necessary means* for keeping out of sin. Now, clearly, an *honest* will of the kind must include the *particular* means—that of avoiding those particular *occasions* which I know are fairly certain to lead me into sin.

The point
to be
attended
to.

A man subject to dizziness knows by common sense that he needs to keep away from the edge of a precipice. In guarding against an accident, his attention should be directed not so much to *not falling over* as to *not approaching too near*. So, in the matter of temptation, 'He who loves the danger shall perish in it.'¹ It is the case of the moth and the candle-flame, and the soul that will not restrain itself from hovering round the seductive brilliancy has no serious will not to be singed

¹ Ecclus. iii. 27.

and drawn in. This is, perhaps, specially true of sensual temptation.

An 'occasion' of sin means any circumstance—^{What is an 'occasion' of sin?} anything at all that has a name—which we have serious reason to expect will cause us to sin. (At present, we are chiefly dealing with *mortal* sin.)

The question whether something be, in truth, an occasion of sin does not necessarily depend upon whether we have *actually fallen* in those identical circumstances, though, perhaps, in very many cases it is the sad experience of a fall into sin that brings clear knowledge to a man of what will occasion it. When we know from an unfortunate experience that something will cause us more or less certainly to commit sin, we stand all the more distinctly warned to shun the same in future.

What *kind* of 'occasion' is it that we are bound to shun?

1. We are always bound under pain of mortal sin to avoid that sort of *occasion* of mortal sin which is both 'proximate' and 'voluntary'—^{Occasions 'proximate' and 'voluntary.'} terms yet to be explained.

But there are two possible ways in which I can satisfy this duty—namely, either by removing *myself*—i.e., by flying the danger; or else by removing the *proximity* of the danger—i.e., interposing protections and safeguards, so that the peril ceases to be pressing and imminent.

2. The danger must be judged *relatively* to my own individual character and tendencies; for it is ^{What is dangerous to me} *I*, and not another, who have to avoid this sin, and it is *my* soul that *I* have to save. People

may vary greatly in susceptibility to grave temptation, or to particular classes of temptation, according to difference of temperament and the *ascendency* in their composition of this or that evil passion. In one it may be pride, in another covetousness, in a third the allurements of the flesh, and so on. We must judge according to our own case, just as we do in caring for our *bodily* health. Some do not mind a chill, though it may bring others to death's door. We must go by our *own* spiritual constitution, not by what others may do without taking harm to their souls—that is to say, supposing that they take none, which we can seldom know.

But now to redeem my promise to explain terms. Occasions may be *proximate* or *remote*. An occasion is called 'proximate,' or a *close* occasion, when it leads to my fall *directly*, and not through the subsequent introduction of further causes or circumstances. Otherwise the occasion is called *remote*, or distant. Examples will help.

When
proximate.

Examples
of—
1. *Proxi-
mate
occasions.*

Bibulus knows that as sure as he goes into a public-house for beer he gets fully drunk. The public-house is to Bibulus a manifest *proximate* occasion of mortal sin. It might not be always a 'voluntary' one, but that is not our present point. Conversa, who experiences grave temptations against the Catholic faith, which she has embraced, in womanhood, has more than once been completely upset in mind by talking with a clever agnostic friend, or by turning into a non-Catholic church for curiosity—'not to take part in the

service' (as she pleads), 'but just to see how the old place is getting on.' Conversation with the friend on religious topics, or, more probably, any lengthened *private* conversation with her, is a *proximate* occasion of sin for Conversa, and so, too, is her hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt.

Ptolemy is generally led into grave sin when-
 ever he goes with his acquaintance Cæsar. Now
 Brutus, a friend of Ptolemy, asks him to come
 down with him for the week-end to Brighton.
 Ptolemy declines, on one excuse or another. But
 what was his real reason? Well, he knew that
 Cæsar sometimes went to Brighton for week-ends
 also, and might come across him, and would
 probably ask him to spend some time in his
 company. Here Ptolemy may be commended
 generally for his thoroughgoing precautions on
 behalf of the Ten Commandments. All the same,
 his trip to Brighton in Brutus' trusty company
 would have been at most a *remote* occasion of his
 falling under Cæsar's baneful influence. For it
 was only an off-chance that the evil genius would
 be in Brighton at all, not to mention other
 uncertainties which further diminished the risk.

If all *remote* occasions had to be avoided, daily
 life would become a perpetual sin-trap. The
 amount of care and forethought needed would
 constitute a sheer moral impossibility for mortal
 man; and, as the Church teaches, 'God does
 not command impossibilities.' This consideration
 applies with still greater force to occasions of
venial sin.

2. *Remote*
occasions.

Impossi-
 bilities
 are not
 com-
 manded.

When
'voluntary.'

The next important distinction is between occasions that are 'necessary' and those that are 'voluntary'—that is to say, between provocations to sin that cannot *practically* be avoided, and such as can be, at choice, by a person of ordinary goodwill. An occasion will not cease to be voluntary, in the present sense, merely because the person can say truly that he does not deliberately seek for it. There will still be 'voluntariness' in his *choosing to remain in it, and without any sufficient cause*.

Applica-
tion
to life.

Provocation to sin that presents itself naturally in the midst of our ordinary and (I am supposing) in themselves *lawful* occupations, profession, work, needful recreations, etc., and is, in actual life, inseparable from them, may be considered *necessary* and not *voluntary*, inasmuch as it cannot be escaped, except at the cost of really grave inconveniences, loss, etc., such as the reasonableness of Almighty God's law does not *oblige* us to incur. Such grave hardships constitute, equivalently, what theology understands by 'moral impossibility'—*i.e.*, extreme difficulty such as no one can be expected to remove. Countless thousands of poor toilers are in this case—engaged all the day in factories, shops, offices, and the like, where the moral atmosphere is too often of the lowest and vilest. There is a Latin axiom of psychology, *Assuetis non fit passio*—*i.e.*, 'One is but slightly influenced by what one constantly experiences.' So these toilers may become so accustomed to the danger that it ceases greatly to impress them. The taint of their surroundings may cling to them no more than the putrid water

of some muddy pond does to a duck's back—thanks to the Sacraments. Yet there may be other characters for whom unsought temptations, incidental to their work and companionship, may continue to be real and vivid. Are they bound to forsake their employment in order to avoid proximate occasions? No, certainly—because these are ‘necessary,’ and not ‘voluntary.’ The way for *them* is to reduce the danger to *remoteness* by using spiritual means of grace and common-sense precautions—prayer, regularity in going to the Sacraments, as far as this is possible in their circumstances, keeping to themselves, and the like. They must fortify themselves against the danger, since they cannot, humanly speaking, leave it.

But are such people *never* bound to remove *themselves*? Yes, sometimes, in certain favourable circumstances, when they can fly without bringing grave loss and inconvenience and difficulty to themselves, or to others who have a *claim* upon them.

Let us take an example. Martha, a servant, or governess, or other employee, has a good situation, and, for one cause or another, would find it very difficult to find another—at least, *surely*, and in such good time as to prevent really serious temporal consequences to herself, or to those depending on her. Nevertheless, she has a rather weak character, and, her virtue being exposed to temptations *peculiar to her present situation*, she is at times led into grievous sin.

A test case.

What is her obligation in the circumstances? Every one would urge her to be on the watch for

a more suitable place. But she is not bound 'to give notice' until she has secured herself from the fate of the dog in the fable, with the two pieces of meat, and has another assured, and *sufficiently*, if not quite equally, paid berth. For there may be in some cases a *partial* sacrifice of gain which would cause no *grave* hardship, though it might involve some economy in pleasures, dress, and the like, which is doubtless unpleasant. However, these *minor* drawbacks must be put up with for her soul's sake.

But if the soul must be put first in this respect, surely Martha is bound, on the same principle, to fly at *every* cost? Not so; for if the cost be of the heavy kind we originally supposed, Martha is indeed in a 'proximate,' but not in a 'voluntary' occasion. She is *morally* forced to stay on, though physically she could, of course, run away and take the next train home. Consequently, she has a right to rely upon the efficacy of extra spiritual and prudential precautions which she adopts—and, moreover, is *bound* to adopt—for strengthening herself, and thus reducing the danger to manageable proportions, making it *remote*—*e.g.*, more frequent Sacraments (*especially* Holy Communion), attention to prayer, and discreet conduct.

Profes-
sions and
their
dangers.

Every profession in life has its spiritual dangers, for the devil, the world, and the flesh cannot be entirely excluded from any of them. But in the severe struggle for existence men, and women too, in search of a livelihood must perforce take

to that particular line of life for which Nature or education has fitted them, always supposing that it be not *in itself* a sinful avocation, like the pick-pocket's or burglar's, and other ways of getting money by sin. Yet one cannot say they are bound to give up their chance of support and starve simply because at times they are strongly tempted and do not always resist.

We read in the life of St. Andrew Avellino that on catching himself in a small lie while pleading at the bar, he conceived such horror for this offence against God that he threw up his profession and betook himself to the ecclesiastical, and afterwards to the religious, state of life. That was an act of high Christian perfection, no doubt; but it cannot be proposed to all men as an obligatory standard of conduct.

A perfect example.

Speaking generally, it is not circumstances that cause sin, but a lack of sufficient prudence and courage to shape one's course from the *start* of a difficulty so as to keep danger at arm's length; or the evil may come from allowing the spiritual system to run low through neglecting obligatory religious duties, such as Mass on Sundays and holy-days, and Easter duties. The Catholic, at least, need never lack such religious props for a naturally weak will.

Not a matter of surroundings.

The stage and kindred professions are commonly thought to bristle with exceptional moral dangers. Without questioning that such walks in life have their peculiar spiritual risks, one may still ask whether the temptations usually associ-

The stage.

ated with them, at least as usually pursued in this country, are not at times exaggerated. There appears reason for doubting whether these perils are greater than those attending other professions, such as the army, navy, medicine, or hospital nursing, towards which, however, the same amount of objection is not generally entertained, even by conscientious people.

But at least it may be granted that the risks of the said more emotional professions will be far greater for people of weak will and easy-going, pleasure-loving characters.

A
manager's
opinion.

A non-Catholic, who had had no small experience in theatrical management in its higher grades, once expressed himself to the present writer substantially as follows :

‘They say that the stage is, upon the whole, a snare to morals. Well, my own experience does not bear out that view. The profession seems to me, upon the whole, an elevating one, except for those whose lack of principle would most likely send them under in whatever profession they adopted. I have, of course, come across both good and bad among the acting fraternity; and I must admit that, among the good, members of your Church figure prominently.’ It must be borne in mind, however, that this witness referred to the better class of theatrical companies; and, moreover, not being a Catholic, may have judged matters according to a less exacting standard of morals than that placed before her children by the Catholic Church.

No. XXXI.

CONNEXION BETWEEN CONTRITION AND ABSOLUTION.

I. ACTS of contrition should be made with Reference to Confession. reference to the absolution in prospect. By 'reference' is meant having Confession in view when making the acts, and meaning them for that purpose.

For fear of the ubiquitous 'fidget,' I hasten to Caution against scruples. add that no express direction of the mind, or 'intention' of the sort, is needed when we are formally engaged in preparing for Confession.

This point being settled, we come to the Stray acts of contrition. question as to how far acts of sorrow made at odd times in our prayers—say at night-prayers, after examining into the faults of the day—count as preparation for some future Confession. This is a question which mostly concerns those whose opportunities for Confession come unexpectedly to them, and have to be seized on at short notice. Those who make daily examination of conscience for some little space each day, and with average attention, adding acts of contrition, should be ready for Confession any time at very short notice indeed. Perhaps, if the 'exams.' last no longer than the *very* brief pause given in the old-fashioned family night-prayers—at the words, 'Here let

us examine,' etc.—a little more time may be needed for marshalling our sins when Confession is at hand, especially with those who cannot quickly 'focus' their minds upon their interior state.

Renewal
of con-
trition.

Now, as for the acts of contrition made on stray occasions, it is strongly recommended expressly to *renew* these *for purpose of Confession*. That is all I mean by this point, which clearly does not concern people who go to Confession at leisure, and at the time chosen by themselves, and hence have time for a full preparation.

Contri-
tion
before
absolu-
tion.

2. What is the *order* in which contrition and absolution should stand towards one another? In practice, contrition should come *before* absolution. Clearly, to be effective, absolution must fall upon a heart *already* contrite. This is the only safe way of securing a moral oneness between sorrow and absolution. This does not mean that absolution will not benefit us unless we are sorry before going into the confessional, *which, however, is what every one ought to endeavour to secure*. Nor must the contrition necessarily be realized in any set form of words, provided that in our hearts we have the true qualities of contrition. Still, for young people, for the unlettered, and even for those whose lives give them little opportunity for religious reflection, a set form of words is of considerable importance. No child, or recent convert, should fail to know some verbal form of contrition substantially by heart. For example, the following brief form expresses all

the essentials of contrition: 'O God, I am truly sorry for all my sins, because Thou art so good; and resolve, with Thy help, to sin no more.'

As a matter of practice, it is important that our contrition and purpose of amendment should be in operation *before* entering the confessional, lest flurry or distraction should cause us to miss this essential for pardon. If, through no fault of ours, we are practically *forced* to hurry in to the priest without having had the time necessary for this, there is no objection to our telling the priest so, and asking for a few moments to ourselves for supplying the want. So, too, should I by chance find it impossible to move myself to any sort of sorrow or purpose at my preparation, let me expose my difficulty with the simplicity of a child to my spiritual 'Padre,' so that he may help me in the matter. If this be done, it will be seldom indeed that any soul will have to retire unab-solved. But where *mortal* sin is in question, such callousness will generally yield to a really honest effort at preparation. For, grace to repent of mortal sin is necessary for salvation, and God is pledged to give me whatever I need for that end. 'God wills all men to be saved.'¹ And His will is no *velleity*, but an earnest, efficacious will *that supplies the means*. Calvary, Holy Mass, and all Seven Sacraments leave no doubt about that. If I ask from my heart, I shall receive.

In the light of these truths, it is not rash to say that if, at my preparation and *after asking*

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

'Had I proper con-trition?'

God's help, I have *honestly tried* to be contrite and resolved, I need not plague myself afterwards with the misgiving, 'Perhaps I had not sufficient contrition, and absolution was vain!' *In these circumstances of good-will on my part*, it is not the *presence* of enough contrition that I have to prove. That may be presumed, with all confidence in God. It is its *absence* that needs proving.

An ill-
used text.

But I remember the words, 'No man knoweth whether he be deserving of love or of hate.'¹ It is true that no one can have *absolute* certainty that he is contrite any more than that he is in the state of grace. But we can have a practical, working certainty. Else St. Paul's command to the would-be communicant to 'prove himself' would be a vain precept. But to come to the original text—a much-abused one and not unfrequently found quoted in sermons and books in utter disregard of its evident meaning in the Biblical surroundings in which we find it. As the *verse following* shows, it means that since both just and unjust have afflictions as well as good things in this life, it is impossible to judge who is in God's favour and who is not, merely from a man's temporal condition.² The text in question does not so much as touch upon this point of

¹ Eccles. ix. 1, but read verse 2.

² This passage from Ecclesiastes enables us to reckon at its true value the popular fallacy that the (alleged) greater material prosperity of Protestant countries, as compared with Catholic ones, points to Divine approval of Protestantism!

'assurance' as to one's acceptability to God. The *heading* of the chapter may mislead the unwary, although in itself, and as an isolated statement, true in the qualified sense above explained.

No. XXXII.

CONFESSION.

Judicial
process.

By Confession I here mean, not the whole process of the Sacrament of Penance, but that part of it which consists in telling our sins to the priest. The priest being in the capacity of a *spiritual judge*, and having to pronounce sentence in virtue of Christ's authority, obviously needs to know what the cause is upon which he has to pass judgment; for the Sacrament of Penance is a sort of judicial proceeding, in which the penitent is at one and the same time the culprit, or prisoner of sin, and the *witness* of his own prosecution. The principle of human law that no one is bound to accuse himself is superseded here by the precept of Christ commanding us to whisper our offences into the ears of His representative of our own accord, but only under the seal of an *absolutely inviolable secrecy*.

The chief point to be settled is, What am I obliged to confess?

What I
must tell.
Not to be
imitated.

First of all, my *own* sins, not other people's.

A penitent, afflicted with the bad habit of gossiping about her Confessions, once told her bosom friend the penance she had been given, apparently not seeing the point of it. 'Do you

know, the Father I went to told me to say one 'Hail Mary' for my own sins, and the Seven Penitential Psalms for *my husband's*!' The bosom friend suggested to her by way of explanation that perhaps she had been manifesting her husband's misdoings far more than her own, and that the distribution of penance had been made accordingly. All mention of third persons by name, and, as far as is consistent with the duty of Confession and our need of advice for the performance of our own duty, all allusion to others should be carefully avoided.¹

Let me preface the answer to the question before us with the teaching of the Council of Trent: 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, when about to ascend into heaven, left priests to represent Him as rulers and judges, to whom all mortal crimes into which the faithful had fallen were to be referred, in order that they might pronounce sentence of pardon or of retention, in virtue of the power of the Keys.'² For it is plain that, unless they had knowledge of the cause, the priests could neither exercise their power, nor could they observe justice in imposing penalties if the faithful only declared their sins in a general way, instead of in kind and in number. Hence it follows that all mortal sins of which they become

Council
of Trent
explains
strict
duty.

¹ See below, p. 297.

² This synonym for the power of absolving from sin is taken from our Lord's words to Peter: 'To thee will I give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind,' etc. (St. Matt. xvi.).

aware, after carefully searching their consciences, must be laid open in Confession, however hidden they may be, and even though contrary to the two last Commandments of the Decalogue;¹ for these often inflict deeper wounds on the soul, and are more dangerous than sins which are committed openly.'

Two chief points.

Two expressions here chiefly deserve attention. The Council requires that sins be confessed *in kind* and also *singly*.

'But since all mortal sins—even those of thought—make men children of wrath and enemies of God, it is necessary to seek the Divine pardon for all by means of a modest and candid Confession.'

From the above teaching—also formulated by Trent in dogmatic *definitions*—we are now able to gather the current answer to the question, What must we confess?

I. The kind of mortal sin.

I. We must confess the *kind* of mortal sin, and with sufficient clearness to enable the priest to understand definitely what we have done, and, consequently, must mention any circumstance that *alters* its kind, whether for the better or for the worse.

Aggravations of sin not essential.

But this duty does not oblige us to mention 'aggravating' circumstances. What are these? The term refers to accidental circumstances of our offence, which make it more blameworthy, but do not substantially alter its theological kind.

¹ *I.e.*, according to the Catholic reckoning (see 'Letters,' First Series, p. 12).

It does not mean what John thought it did when, after owning to some very bad language to a fellow-lodger, whom he found wearing his (John's) best boots, he added in explanation that the lodger had kicked him, 'And, your reverence, it's an aggravating circumstance to be kicked with one's own boots.' To illustrate. A person sins by intemperance *a few hours after his Communion*, or on *Good Friday*, or is guilty of a sin of revengeful or unchaste thought *in the Church*. Any one of the italicized circumstances certainly adds some malice to the sins in question, yet it does not alter its species. On the contrary, a sin of severe bodily assault *upon a parent*, a theft of furniture *out of a church*, or stealing twopence *from a starving beggar*, are not merely aggravated sins, but sins of a different kind to what they would be without the special circumstances attending them.

Just as the mention of *aggravating circumstances* is not obligatory, so still less need we enter into detailed description of the sin *within* its kind. Nay, in the case of some sins, this could on no account be allowed, and would be violating the instruction of Trent to the effect that our Confession, though it must be 'candid,' must also be 'modest.' If we are in doubt as to whether we have been sufficiently exact in telling our sin, we can always ask the confessor, 'Have I explained sufficiently?' Being trained in the law, he knows how far you are bound to explain. We do not deal here with the difficulties and objections suggested by this duty of giving the priest to

No minor details.

understand sufficiently the nature of our sin. These have been already dealt with in the First Series of Letters, under the Sixth Commandment.¹

2. Number of mortal sins.

2. *The number of times* a mortal sin has been committed must also be stated by the penitent—that is to say, as far as his memory serves him after a reasonably ‘careful searching of conscience,’ or examination of conscience, as we call it. Of the *amount* of examination required, more will be said presently.

What if I forget?

Now, it is pretty clear that a person who has, for *all* the affairs of life, a bad memory will not find himself suddenly in possession of a good one just because he is trying to remember his sins. No doubt light from God, which we implore before beginning our preparation for Confession, will help us a good deal. But still we may find it hard to count. One who was confessing after a long absence from the Sacraments would probably find it quite impossible to be accurate. The nearest he can get to is ‘about’ so many times, or, say, ‘between ten and twenty times.’ This—given the reasonable care demanded of him—is near enough for purposes of Confession. Of course, if after his Confession he remembers that the number he gave was *notably* wide of the mark, he must correct the mistake in his next Confession. Thus, if he says ‘about five or six times,’ and then finds out it was certainly eleven or twelve times, correction becomes necessary; for he would not say, for example, that a promise

¹ Pp. 252-254, and pp. 246-248.

made to him of a present of '£11 or £12' was reasonably fulfilled by giving him '£5 or £6.'

But what if I mistake the number of times, and never remember the true number to confess it? Will the times that are not reasonably covered by my approximate statement be forgiven by the absolution? Most certainly they will, because my inaccuracy was not wilful, and I would have confessed the right number had I been able to discover it. The same applies to kinds of sins which have honestly escaped my memory. Of course, there is no obligation to go to Confession oftener (provided I make my Easter duties yearly) merely because my memory does not serve me well for an interval between my Confessions of more than, say, a month or two months.

A comforter
for bad
memories.

Both these rules—*i.e.*, as to *kind* and *number*—apply even to 'hidden sins of thought,' as the Council has explained to us, and not merely to outward sins of word or act.

From what has been said the following forms of accusation are evidently quite insufficient for our ordinary Confessions—*e.g.*, 'I have sinned,' 'I have committed many sins' or 'many mortal sins.' Neither *kind* nor definite *number* is stated. So, too, 'I have committed mortal sins of thought,' or 'of word,' is an equally faulty way of confessing. Again: 'I have committed sins against charity, humility, chastity,' states neither the precise *kind* of sin against those virtues, which may be in thought, or in word, or in deed, nor the number. (This form *would* do, of course, for

Insufficient
forms of
accusation.

that *general* accusation of *past* sins which devout Catholics often freely add to the sins committed since their last Confession.)

It may be useful to give an imaginary sample of the *chief faults* in the manner of confessing :

A sample
of errors.

Sara Tick, residing at 4A, Paradise Alley, has had a passionate quarrel with a fellow-lodger, and used insulting and profane words, and broken her neighbour's wrist with a poker. She tells the priest: 'I occasionally has words with Mrs. Scrooge. She's the lady in the back-parlour. A good woman, according to her light, your reverence, but, like all on us, has her faults. She *has* a temper, Father! Well, she called me out of my name. It was this way, to put it short-like: It was last Sunday fortnight come to-morrow—no, asking your pardon, it was Saturday, I mind me, because our Susan Victoria had just come in from Noggins', at the public, with a pint of porter for my husband. Not that Tick's a drunkard, you know. Bless you, there's not a soberer, cleaner-living man in the alley. Well, Mrs. Scrooge, to be short, came in all of a bounce-like into my parlour, and says to me: "Mrs. Tick," she says, "where's my best tea-cup gone to—the one with a handle?" Well, to think as I would have took it, your reverence! Well, God forgive me! I used words and did things as I oughtn't, and me a respectable married woman, too, with six childer, and me eldest boy in the Post Office. . . . And I often has words like that, your reverence.'

Now, it will be seen that this good woman has Lesson.
told the priest everything he did not need to know, except that there was a wordy quarrel, and omitted just what was wanted. As to what *kind* of words she used in her wrath, or what kind of unlawful acts she was guilty of, she gives no inkling, nor any indication of the number of occasions. And she mentions names, and tells Mrs. Scrooge's weaknesses as well as her own.

On the other hand, the more educated penitent More
might err another way. Without actually failing educated
to indicate the general kind of sin or the number, errors.
it is 'possible by means of circumlocution to express a fault in the form least unpleasant to self-love. A good deal of the time devoted to examination may be wasted in looking about for the 'nicest way of putting things'—*i.e.*, nicest to oneself. For example, we will suppose an angry tirade of abuse and false accusation might be confessed as 'not speaking as kindly as I ought,' or telling a big lie against a neighbour's character as 'not being as exact in the matter of truthfulness as I ought to be.'

In general, it may be said that those will derive Humility
more abundant fruit from Confession who do not prevents
spare their vanity and pride. If people find that 'routine.'
their weekly or fortnightly Confessions become matters of insipid routine, or they do not 'feel' as if they had been to Confession, possibly the explanation may be that they make the process as comfortable as possible to their amour-propre. Human nature being what it is, Confession will

never become a formality if it be absolutely candid, and unsparing to vanity and self-esteem.

‘I threw some fading flowers on a dung-heap overnight,’ says a thoughtful French writer. ‘In the morning I found them blooming afresh. So humiliation causes strong souls to bloom and expand.’ To put it another way: An honest act of self-humiliation is the most invigorating of spiritual tonics.

A good
tonic.

Nothing so quickens our steps in the path of holiness, perhaps because it is one of the most costly virtues. Hence, to give us courage, the Son of God, made man, ‘humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant,’ and ‘humbled Himself . . . becoming obedient unto death,’ even the most shameful death of the Cross.

Only fair! In our moments of blind passion we do not pause to think of the shame we are putting Him to before His enemies, our tempters. We only begin to count the shame when there is question of saving ourselves from the consequences of our sin. Yet is it not just that we should then, by confessing it, take up the bitter cup of humiliation—‘the cup of salvation’ for us—firmly into both our hands, put it bravely to our lips, and drink it to the very dregs, by way of just amends to the Sacred Heart wounded by our betrayal, ‘bruised for our sins’? We may well say with Dismas, ‘And we, indeed (suffer), justly.’

No. XXXIII.

REASONS EXCUSING FROM FULL CON- FESSION.

ABSOLUTE completeness in actually confessing all mortal sins *in kind* and *number* (the obligation ^{Integrity necessary by law.} does not extend to venial ones), though commanded and necessary, as we have seen, is not essential *to the very nature of the Sacrament*. If it were, clearly pardon could never be received when any single mortal sin remained unmentioned, from whatever cause. Now, every one knows, for instance, that if a mortal sin be honestly omitted through forgetfulness, the sins *are* forgiven, including the forgotten one, although the obligation to correct the mistake later, when remembered, still holds good. Similarly, it is evident that a person suddenly struck down by an accident, if able to confess at all, will be physically unable to tell everything, and yet, if contrite, receives the full benefit of absolution. The question, therefore, arises : Are there any reasons making it lawful to omit a mortal sin in Confession, and, if so, what are they ?

The case of *bona fide forgetfulness* has already been mentioned, and, besides, is pretty obvious.

Physical Impossibility.—Thus, *dumb* people, who cannot express their sins by signs, are excused, ^{Physical obstacles.}

for they are not bound to write down their sins.

Deaf people, who cannot confess completely without the Confessor's help, and, on the other hand, are unable to understand his questions. Such people should not be uneasy afterwards because they think their Confession was not complete. They do their best according to their power, and, moreover, they must remember that a priest is not *allowed*, and therefore not bound, to risk being overheard by persons outside the confessional through greatly raising his voice. So both parties are right in leaving things as they are, and the Confession is perfectly good and sufficient.

Foreigners, who cannot speak any language known to the priest. They are not bound, and, indeed, should not be advised, even if willing, to make use of an interpreter. Where being put off till a suitable confessor is at hand would be grievous to such persons, as it usually would be when they have prepared for Confession, they may comfort themselves with the answer of the Holy Office (February 28, 1633, quoted by Buccerone): 'In the case where a person does his best to express his sins in kind by signs, but cannot be understood, absolution may be given upon his manifesting his sins only in general.' Of course, such persons will be bound afterwards to confess their sins in detail, like every one else, when a confessor who understands them becomes available.

Moral impossibility, either on the penitent's side or the priest's. This cause for incomplete Confession will arise more commonly in a case of sickness. In a shipwreck or violent earthquake, when absolution is given *en masse*, people are not bound publicly to defame themselves by declaring their sins promiscuously before their neighbours. They could *physically*, but the grave moral hardship of doing so excuses them.

Well-grounded fear of serious bodily, moral, or spiritual injury that would result from full Confession of one's sins, either to the penitent, to the confessor, or to anyone else, is another valid cause of exemption. Thus, as regards *bodily* harm, a priest attending cases of pestilential fever is not bound to prolong his stay with a penitent stricken with it in order to secure a full confession of sins, if he has good reason to fear catching the plague himself. And there are similar cases conceivable on the penitent's side.

Clearly, the evil alleged in excuse—or 'incon- N.B. venience,' as it is technically called—must not be easily interpreted nor lightly presumed. It will seldom occur in reality. Moreover—and this needs careful notice—the 'inconvenience' must be one that is not involved in the very nature of Confession. Thus, the mere shame of having to tell hidden sins is a hardship essentially bound up with our Lord's precept of Confession, and never excuses anyone from full Confession. The very idea of Confession supposes this trial; it forms, so to say, part of the bargain, if we are to obtain

God's pardon. It was obviously contemplated and foreseen by our Lord when He instituted this Sacrament of *Penance*. But when, for example, a penitent has solid and undoubted proof from actual facts that Confessions made in a particular confessional, though carried on in a low voice, are constantly overheard outside, as may happen from structural peculiarities of the place, he is justified in not confessing completely. He should, of course, respectfully inform the priest of the danger of which he has proof, so that it may be provided against, perhaps by conducting things in a whisper. He is not justified in deliberately choosing that confessional by preference in order to enjoy the privilege of incompleteness, which, however, would only be a temporary one, as will be seen presently.

Further
N.B.'s.

Also, it must be carefully remembered that even where *solid* reason for incompleteness exists, only *that amount* of reticence is lawful which is necessary *for the object in view*—viz., for avoiding the *grave* evil *reasonably* feared. Moreover, there must be some real *need* for going to Confession at all when the latter has to be incomplete. Theologians of weight, however, allow that the grievousness of remaining *another* day unabsolved from mortal sin, or having otherwise to miss Holy Communion, is reason enough for doing so. But, of course, the incompleteness must be made good in the penitent's *next* Confession.

CONFESSION OF SIN AFFECTING ANOTHER'S
CHARACTER.

If a person has committed a mortal sin involving the grievous sin of another, and in his actual circumstances cannot confess it properly without letting the priest know *definitely* who the other sinner is,¹ then (1) he is bound, if possible, to confess that sin fully to some other priest who will not be made any the wiser. This is necessary for saving the good name of his neighbour. We have here an illustration of the principle that a man has a right to the good opinion of each individual neighbour (in this case the priest), if he has first publicly forfeited it as regards the kind of sin in question. (2) But what if he needs to confess, and yet cannot manage to seek another confessor? Though on this point theological opinion is divided, it is *practically* lawful for the penitent to conceal whatever is *necessary* for warding off all suspicion from the other offender; but he must observe the *cautions* already given above for cases of incomplete self-accusation.

As, however, there is also weighty theological authority *requiring* full Confession—if no other priest is to be had—in spite of the risk of secret defamation, the penitent would not *sin* by confessing fully. These other authorities argue that, since Christ commanded Confession, in spite

¹ Of course, many sins involve a second offender of some sort—*e.g.*, duelling. But here it is supposed that full Confession will enable the priest to identify the *exact person*.

of its obliging the penitent to defame himself in secret to the priest, He cannot have required us to be *more* careful of another's character than of our own.

Practical
result.

The practical result, then, is that, under the circumstances and cautions set forth, it is *lawful* to confess fully, but is not *obligatory*—*i.e.*, whichever the penitent chooses to do, failing another confessor, he will not sin either way. The lack of another confessor is essential to the case, otherwise one would be revealing the hidden sin of another without any necessity. Of course, if the other person is publicly known as an offender *in that particular kind*, then he has no reputation to lose in that matter, and no defamation can be committed regarding the same, and there would, therefore, be no excuse for holding back the sin in Confession.

No. XXXIV.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

WHAT amount of care must we bestow upon this part of preparation for Confession?

Only *ordinary reasonable* care. Extraordinary pains and effort are not demanded. The care is to be such as a sensible person would, according to his abilities, give to a serious, and not exceptionally momentous, matter of business. Ye scrupulous souls, pray take notice!

‘But,’ objects one of them, ‘if I examined for longer I might discover some *mortal* sin or sins?’ As the Northener replied in another matter: ‘You mought, but, agin, you moughtn’t.’ Vague possibilities are beside the point. The question is: Have you any solid reason—based, for instance, on former experiences—for supposing that such discovery would have occurred? If not, you are under no obligation to extend your search. Speaking generally, those who, as far as they know, commonly live in the state of grace *have* no solid reason to expect such a discovery. Hence, they are justified in deciding according to what commonly happens with them.

The more anxiously devout are often naturally inclined to excess of self-examination and intro-

Ordinary
pains.

An
anxious
question.

Excess
not
Catholic.

spection. Now, it should be noticed that the Council of Trent expressly rejects the charges of the Protestant Reformers, who said that Confession was a cruel 'butchery of consciences' (*carneficinam conscientiarum*). The Catholic spirit will, therefore, suggest to fidgety souls that they ought not to turn Confession into what the Church says it should not be, either for themselves or yet for others—*e.g.*, by tormenting some small child with protracted examination before Confession. Possibly it was unwise people of this sort who gave a handle to the same heretics for objecting against Confession that 'it left nothing to the Divine Mercy,' as the Council records. There is food for thought here, and 'salvation from our enemies.' Over-self-examination commonly springs from *a lack of confidence in God*. We want to make everything mathematically sure and 'safe' by our own industry. A vain attempt! Let us convince ourselves that even were we to make a most accurate General Confession of our whole lives every day in the week, we could never—so to say—'be quits' with Almighty God. In our last hour we should feel—as all must—the need of throwing ourselves unreservedly on His Infinite Compassion. In His sight, as the Church prays over her holiest dead, 'no man shall be justified.' And again: 'If Thou, O Lord, shalt mark iniquities, Lord, *who* shall stand it?'

Ways of
excess.

It would be folly, for instance, for weekly or monthly penitents to insist on wading through

an endless printed form of examination such as is to be found in some Prayer Books, which give a long string of 'Have you's' under each of the Ten Commandments, the Precepts of the Church, and the Seven Deadly Sins. This might perhaps be useful for one who has been for years absent from his religious duties, but for *very* few others. Even the shorter Prayer-Book form, 'against God, my neighbour, myself,' may be superfluously long for many weekly penitents. From the very fact of their confessing so often—and not to mention daily examination in their home devotions—*e.g.*, at night-prayers—the worst memories cannot need artificial aids for recalling their ordinary graver faults. And if, in any week, an exceptionally grave one had occurred, why, it would vividly and persistently recur to their consciences until they had got rid of it in Confession. Would they not be better employed, during the brief space they need for preparation, in exciting their hearts to deeper and more perfect sorrow, and arousing their wills to more determined resolution to eliminate the more salient faults wholly from their lives? Then, perhaps, there would be no cause for complaining that their faults recur in the same number week after week without perceptible diminution, except as far as may be accounted for by accidental circumstances. If they will take the trouble, a small amount of reflection will probably show that their *principal* faults are reducible to a very few heads.

Why not examine upon these alone? Anything

else of extraordinary occurrence will suggest itself spontaneously.

One of the effects of overexamination upon more God-fearing consciences is like that produced upon nervous subjects by studying the symptoms of innumerable maladies set forth in medical books. The sensitive lay reader ends by fancying himself to contain the germs of every imaginable disease.

Those who confess at longer intervals—say, every two or three months—will probably need somewhat fuller reflection on their conduct in order to reckon up their faults, in proportion to the length of the interval. But here, too, excess is possible, especially on the part of those who have been told—perhaps over and over again—that they are scrupulous, or scrupulously inclined.

AIDS TO EXAMINATION.

Which
sins are
mortal?

Souls often feel this difficulty: ‘I know that all mortal sins must be confessed; but my difficulty is to know when a thought, or word, or deed, or omission is a mortal sin.’ My present remarks are meant to meet this difficulty—that is to say, as far as it can be met in general and in writing, or without giving a theological treatise. First, a word about

CONSCIENCE.

Our
faithful
mentor.

Conscience is the tablet on which are recorded all our responsible acts, good and bad. It is the ‘small, still voice’ which warns us as to the

moral goodness or badness of acts contemplated, and registers the goodness or badness of acts done.

Technically, and for our present purpose, it is the judgment passed by our reason upon the lawfulness or unlawfulness of a particular thought, word, or action presented to our mind. What is conscience?

This judgment pronounces two different sentences, according as it functions *before* we decide to act, or *after* we have decided. We may call these two things respectively the *previous* conscience and the *after*-conscience. Two acts of conscience. The previous one warns me beforehand not to do the wrong, and to do the right. The after-conscience certifies the lawfulness of my act when it has been right, and praises me for it,¹ or chides me if I have acted wrongly. It is as though at every moment of my life I stood with an angel of God on either side of me, the one encouraging me to do good and cautioning me against sin, the other with a pen in one hand, and a scroll in the other upon which to record instantly, and in imperishable ink, the good or the evil deed actually performed. Now, to

¹ It is a fallacy for me to suppose that it is a want of *humility* to realize the fact that I have done a good act. God has appointed to my conscience the office of telling me so. Vanity only comes in when I attribute my virtue to myself instead of to the grace and help of God, or fancy myself on the high road to sanctity in consequence, or despise others, or forget the many sins I may also have committed by way of a set-off. Humility is truth, and if we face the truth about ourselves there will be no room for pride.

which of these two angels have I to refer in order to determine whether I sinned or not? To the warning angel, not to the recording one. It is the state of my *previous* conscience as regards the thing done, which settles the *gravity* of my guilt or degree of my innocence. I shall be guilty before God precisely in the degree in which I saw and realized I should be guilty *before* I did the thing. For the action of my *after-conscience* is simply to *register* on the spot the experience of my *previous* one. It cannot make guilty, or *grievously* guilty, that which did not appear to be so in the light of my *previous* conscience.

Thus, if before doing an act I thought it wrong indeed, but not *grievously* sinful, and some hours after doing it, I realize that I was mistaken, and that the thing done is in truth grievous, that discovery does not act backwards upon the merits of my action, or make me guilty before God of a mortal sin.

Difficulty. But, it may be objected, does not this contradict what has been said just now—namely, that the after-conscience merely confirms the judgment of the previous conscience. Now, in the case just proposed the previous conscience, as it would seem, verifies a *venial* sin; the after-conscience a grievous sin.

Answer. There is no contradiction here. For that later discovery of the grievousness of my act, considered in itself, is not the true after-conscience which reported *immediately* upon my act. It is

rather a new act of conscience due to some fresh knowledge or fresh recollection that has come to me since the act was completed. It stands rather as a previous conscience towards some *future* occasion when I may contemplate *repeating* the act, and will warn me for the future that the said act will be no longer merely wrong, but *grievously* wrong. My conscience has become better informed, and a repetition of the original act will *henceforth* be a grievous sin.

So far we have supposed a man's conscience to be in a normal state of honesty and sincerity, no account being taken of special phases. We have considered what would be termed in medicine the 'typical case.'

Another difficulty.

But there is a possibility of complications. These are not merely conceivable; they are, perhaps, of frequent occurrence in actual life. There is, then, the case of a person who not uncommonly yields to passions of a specially soul-blinding kind—sensual passion, or the passion for excessive drink. Such a one may persuade himself, against his better knowledge, that some particular degree of indulgence is 'only *venial*,' and perhaps even seek to persuade others that there is 'no harm' in it. Yet later on, when no longer under the full force of temptation, his after-conscience may tell him plainly that he wilfully deceived himself, that the thing was *grievous*, and that he had all along known it in his heart of hearts to be so.

Here there might appear to be a contradiction Answer.

of the theory laid down above, that the previous and the after-conscience always agree in their verdicts. The inconsistency, however, is more apparent than real. For if there be question of *persuading* oneself—i.e., of stifling the voice of the *previous* conscience—the very need of that act of violence proves that the previous conscience did raise its voice in grave warning, only that the person failed to hear it in all its gravity owing to the cotton-wool with which passion had led him to plug his ears.

It must, however, be carefully noticed—in order to avoid a mischievous exaggeration—that this second case refers to one who is wont to *yield* to passions of the kind, and not to one who is merely *tempted* with frequency, as the best of us may be. Otherwise one would have to conclude that when such *temptations* are in question, no one can rely at all upon the seeming verdict of his conscience before acting—a ruinous theory of wholesale self-deception, entirely subverting the reliability of our ultimate guide in conduct—our Conscience—and at once casting the soul upon a very ocean of hopeless scruples, not to say of blank despair.

Applica-
tion.

All this may appear to be useless speculation. On the contrary, it throws a very practical light upon examination of conscience, and shows me that in taking an account of my past actions I must judge of their gravity according to my knowledge *at the time* of doing them, and not according to improved knowledge, which I may

have acquired after their completion, either by further reflection or by instruction from others.

If I ate meat on Friday, *forgetting* at the time that it was Friday, or seriously defamed a neighbour, *not realizing the seriousness of what I was saying*, then these acts, though grievous sins by nature, are not imputed to *me* as such, because my previous conscience did not warn me to that effect at the time of acting, and therefore they are, on my part, at most venial sins—perhaps no sins at all, according to what I knew at the time.

Ex-
amples :
Friday
absti-
nence.

On the other side, if my previous conscience tells me (owing to my being wrongly informed) that *every* lie, even when not injurious to others, is a mortal sin, and I tell one all the same, I am *guilty* of mortal sin, though another person better instructed would only sin *venially* by telling it. In short, my guilt or innocence, and their *degrees*, before God *depends on what I knew and remembered at the time of acting, not upon better knowledge that may have come to me afterwards.*

A venial
lie.

This point is of great moment for those about to be received into the Catholic Church, and who are preparing to make a confession of their whole previous life. It is obvious that the instructions they have received in Catholic faith and morality may have shown them the sinfulness of many things they have done, which they thought to be either harmless, or not *seriously* wrong. On the other side, they will have discovered other things to be harmless, or only slightly sinful, which their non-Catholic education had trained them to regard

Converts
on recep-
tion.

as '*very* wrong,' the Protestant equivalent for mortal sin. They need only confess according to what their consciences told them as Protestants. For one's responsibility before God for sin lies in the *will* to do that which we consider to be sinful in His eyes, whether we consider rightly or wrongly.

But we have only dealt with a part of the original difficulty, that of knowing what is mortally sinful, and what is not.

Con-
ditions for
mortal
sin :
1. Grave
matter.

Three conditions are needed for *mortal* sin :

(1) That the nature of the act—*i.e.*, the thought, desire, word, deed, or omission—be a *grave* matter, and not something slight or venial. (2) That we both *know* and *recollect* its gravity *at the time* of acting. (3) That we give the *full* consent of our will to the thought or word, etc.

1. How are we to settle point 1? In many cases, no doubt, we cannot without being trained moral theologians. We may have to ask the priest, just as we have often to consult a lawyer upon more difficult points of the law.

Nor is it possible in a work of this kind to go into the matter in detail. Much information may be obtained on this point in the First Series of Letters on the Commandments of God and of the Church, where the principal forms of *grievous* sin are indicated.

In the violation of most of the Commandments of God and of the Church there can be *smallness* of *matter*. God, in His large-mindedness, will not cast me from His friendship for a *light* offence,

which we call *venial* sin. Thus, to steal one penny even from a millionaire, to do *unnecessary* servile work on Sunday for ten minutes, to tell a 'fib' of excuse, or out of vanity, to miss a small and less vital portion of Sunday Mass say, up to the *Gloria in excelsis*—all these are in themselves sins; but their *matter* is not serious enough to constitute a *mortal* sin, however knowingly and deliberately they be committed. There is, however, one class of sins which *always* contain *grave* matter—*i.e.*, those against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments of God—sins against chastity, whether in thought or otherwise.¹ So, in their case, if *mortal* guilt be absent, that will only be because one or other of the two remaining conditions for a mortal sin is wanting, and not because the fault is small by nature.

2. *Knowledge* and *advertence*—that is, I must <sup>2. Know-
ledge
and ad-
vertence</sup> *know* that the act in question is *grievously* wrong, and also I must be *conscious* of that fact, or *remember* it at the time of deciding to do it.

Example: John *knows* from his Catechism that Friday is a day of abstinence; but, going to bed on Wednesday night after two or three days' sleepless travel, he wakes only on *Friday* morning, and thinking it to be *Thursday* morning, orders a mutton chop for breakfast! No sin—for lack of

There are faults, which may be conveniently classed under the heading of 'sensual curiosity,' that are not exactly sins directly against this virtue, and will often be venial; but they may, in cases, be grievous as *proximate occasions* of real sin against chastity.

advertence, not of knowledge as to his religion. On the other hand, Jane, a recent convert, never having been told that the vigils of All Saints (November 1) and of the Assumption (August 15) are days of fasting as well as abstinence, and eating three square meals of fish in the day, commits no sin in God's sight, for want of *knowledge*. The difference between intellectual knowledge and *advertence* is made plain by these two examples of John and Jane. If at any time you had asked them the abstract question as to what their *duties* were, John would have answered rightly, because he *knew*, and Jane wrongly, because she did *not* know. Ignorance excuses from guilt, although, technically, an offence committed in ignorance is called a *material* sin. This means that the thing in itself is wrong, but is not imputed to the doer because he was not aware of the fact. But ignorance, and the disorder it leads to, cannot be rationally desired. A guest who unwittingly sits in the chair belonging to his hostess offends through ignorance. Yet he would have been thankful to anyone who should have warned him in time. So, too, and still more, with reference to the observance of God's law.

3. Full
consent.

3. *Full Consent of the Will*.—This condition has its chief importance in the case of *inward* temptations; for when an *external* act is concerned my consent is commonly involved in the fact of my doing the thing—that is, if I am conscious of my act.

For example, if I steal while walking in my

sleep or hypnotized, I certainly do the external act, but without free consent of my will. I also do it without knowledge, so that if questioned afterwards, I should probably know nothing about it.

My consent may be *partial*, and therefore not full, either because my understanding is clouded at the time, and does not clearly perceive the wrong—*e.g.*, if I blaspheme when half awake; or else because, while knowing clearly, my will does not fully yield—*e.g.*, if, adverting fully to a temptation of revenge, I yield *partially* at first, but still in the end reject it.

This particular condition for mortal sin has obviously a wide application to temptations of sense. In that matter let it be enough to point out the great difference between a simply passive and *unsought-for* experience of sensual gratification and an active desire of the *will* for the same. The former our poor, fallen nature cannot expect always to avoid, and, moreover, it is the very *nature* of such temptations to attract and please the senses. But *active* pleasure depends upon the will, seated in the superior part of our soul, and can always be checked with the grace of God, which supports our hereditary weakness. No matter how utterly vile the temptation, no matter what its duration, *nothing* but a surrender of that *will* can stain our innocence, or induce any spiritual disabilities, according to the moral code of the Christian dispensation.

In temptation, three different spiritual attitudes are possible : (a) I absolutely put away the tempta-

Sensual
tempta-
tions.

Attitudes
towards
temptation.

tion—*i.e.*, as far as my *will* is concerned—which is all that matters before God, though perhaps not all that matters to my pride. *Result* : No sin nor imperfection ; much merit and increase in God's love and friendship ; added strength of will for the next occasion. (b) Or, without exactly yielding, I dally and delay. Blows are given and received on either side in the struggle, and the will wavers ; but, pulling myself together, I reject the temptation in the end. *Result* : Venial sin for the weakness ; merit, etc., for the ultimate victory over self through God's grace. (c) With a previous struggle, or without one, I finally give my will to the sin. *Result* (in *grave* matters) : *Mortal* sin ; yet even here, if I stood true at first, the merit of that part will be restored to me, together with all previous merits, upon my repentance for the final fall. In our Lord's typical account of repentance—the story of the Prodigal—the repentant son, in spite of his humble protest, is restored to fame as a *son* specially privileged, and not as a *servant* who has to begin again in the lowest place.

ABOUT VENIAL SIN.

Requisites
for *venial*
sin.

For *venial* sin, also, some *knowledge* and *advertence* is required, and some degree of *consent* on the part of our will. If there is neither, then there can be no guilt at all, nor punishment due, though there may be *imperfection*. The *matter* of the sin, too, must be light. Speaking accurately, there is no such thing really as an '*indeliberate*'—*i.e.*, a non-deliberate—venial sin—a loose expression

used sometimes for *semi*-deliberate venial sin, one in which either knowledge or consent is *slight*.¹

Venial sin is wholly different from mortal. No number of venial sins can amount to a mortal one. Venial sin does not rob us of God's love in the measure in which we possessed it before offending Him venially; for the love of God for a soul is gauged by the measure of sanctifying grace to which the soul has reached up to that time. It might well appear, when we contrast God's Infinite Majesty with our created insignificance, that *any* fully deliberate violation of His commands would deserve the withdrawal of His love. It was this thought, perhaps, that led Baius—whom Pius V. condemned—into teaching that *every* kind of sin merited eternal punishment. But he lost sight of God's goodness as taught us by the Church. God is too merciful a Father to cast off His frail children for a really light offence.

Further, *venial* sin, besides not destroying, does not even *diminish* God's love for us as it stood before our committing it. This seems to follow inevitably from accepted principles. For grace is a created gift, and therefore limited. The soul itself containing it is also created, and hence a vessel of limited capacity. Now, if each venial sin *diminished* grace, however slightly, then some un-

Essential
difference.

Venial sin
and God's
love.

¹ It may be noticed that the Holy See, in its Decree in Frequent and Daily Communion, in distinguishing between degrees of venial sin, speaks of the graver sort as '*fully deliberate*' (Article III.).

ascertained *number* of venial sins would exhaust grace altogether, and the soul would remain *wholly* deprived of God's grace, which is the effect produced by *mortal* sin. But it is certain that *no* number of venial sins are equivalent in their effect to a *mortal* sin. So it cannot be true that venial sin diminishes grace already had, nor, consequently, God's love for the soul which stands in proportion to that grace.

Evil of
venial
sin—

(a) offence
of God.

But now to look at the other side of the picture. Venial sin, as a deliberate offence against the goodness and holiness of Almighty God, is essentially evil and shameful—so bad a thing that, as the Church teaches, we might not commit the least venial sin even if the whole world and all the people in it could be thereby saved from destruction. *For a good end never justifies the use of means that are in themselves evil.* (Let Protestant neighbours note that the present writer is a Jesuit.)

(b) Loss
and injury
to soul.

Venial sin is evil to us also. Though it does not detract from an already obtained degree of grace, it diminishes the flow of God's favours in the future. Then venial sin, in the form of a calm and fully deliberate habit, has the tendency to accustom us to look temptation coolly in the face, and, despite the warnings of conscience, to embrace it with our whole will. Now, this permanent bent of the will towards evil clearly perceived is obviously a very bad preparation for restraining ourselves when, unexpectedly, perhaps, we are confronted with a temptation to what is not venial, but *mortal*, sin. It is in this light, no

doubt, that we must interpret the teaching of spiritual writers that the commission of venial sin leads to falls into mortal; for it would seem an exaggeration, contradicted by general experience, to apply this maxim of ascetics to lighter and less habitual venial faults that are due to surprise or sudden provocation, and contain little or no malice—sins, too, from which, as the Church has even defined,¹ no one can be absolutely free in practice except in virtue of some special Divine gift, such as our Blessed Lady received, and she alone of all creatures, as far as we have absolutely certain knowledge.²

Imperfection, or lack of perfection, may be *negative*—i.e., a mere omission of some greater good that is open to me, but not commanded under sin; in practice, not making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament when passing a church with leisure at my disposal; not saying my Rosary, although accustomed to say it daily (out of pure devotion). Again, imperfection may be *privative*—i.e., the omission of some *particular* greater good *which I know from tangible evidence God desires me to embrace*, though He does not oblige me under sin. Thus, for example, for a religious to omit without rational cause some pious practice prescribed by the approved rule (even though the rule may not bind under sin) is a *privative* imperfection.

¹ Council of Trent, Session VI., Denzinger, No. 715.

² Hence, in a resolution against *all* venial sins, there must always be the underlying proviso, 'as far as in me lies.'

What is
'imper-
fection?'

It is a positive defect, because there is a *distinct title* upon which that practice is claimed from me. *Indirectly*, the omission *may* be sinful, because its cause or motive may be so—e.g., sloth, human respect, etc. But, apart from this incidental sinfulness, imperfections are not fuel for purgatory, though they entail what is really worse, an eternal diminution in heavenly reward.

Imperfections and Confession.

Imperfections, not being sins, are not genuine matter for *Confession* or for *absolution*. And, except periodically, when a detailed account of one's whole inner life may be useful for obtaining complete guidance from a spiritual director, the long list had better be omitted. Otherwise, while I am detaining the priest for half an hour, or three-quarters, and sedulously cultivating my perfection, penitents awaiting their turn outside will be growing a large crop of bigger things than imperfections, and some of them, perchance, may, on my account, have to go away unshriven of their sins.

We may remain content with the help to greater virtue contained in the Sacrament itself quite independently of a graphic description of our soul's slightest movements.

Confession a preventive: a fallacy exposed.

For the Sacrament of Penance, though primarily designed as a *curative*, also necessarily, and *ex opere operato*, confirms the soul in good. This truth will serve as an answer to the unintelligent protest: What is the object of going frequently to confession when one has no big sins to tell? To which it may be rejoined: What is the use of spreading disinfectants before one has caught

the prevailing epidemic?' Or: 'What is the good of adding to one's store when one is not starving?' Solomon said well: 'The number of fools is infinite.'

There is one aid to examination, or, perhaps, rather to confessing the faults which examination has called to our minds, that should be avoided, and that is writing down a list of the sins for use in the confessional. Written
Con-
fessions.

One cannot say that written Confessions, as a help to memory, are unlawful (if the penitent chooses freely to use them), or that they are in every case objectionable—*e.g.*, especially in the case of those who have to make a general Confession covering many years of religious neglect. The use of such a device may often be necessary in such cases—not as an obligation, of course, but for their own peace of conscience, and, to avoid the great infliction of having afterwards to supply accidental omissions occurring in the general Confession. But, for example, children, however forgetful, should not be trained to put their faults on paper; or, rather, just because they are thoughtless, they are likely to lose these incriminating documents.

It is to be remembered that, however bad the memory, there is never any obligation whatever to use this *extraordinary* means of remedying its defects. So that if, through not making a memorandum, a penitent would forget nineteen out of twenty mortal sins which he had discovered and wished to confess, he would still not be bound to

write down his faults ; and, given sincerity and contrition, the nineteen sins accidentally left out would be forgiven as truly as the twentieth mentioned. Of course he would have to tell in his next Confession any of the nineteen that he had remembered afterwards.

NO. XXXV.

OF DOUBTS AND SCRUPLES.

WE come to a topic of considerable practical Doubts. interest, but one which it is not easy to discuss in general. Here is the question: 'When I see plainly that the sin is mortal, my course is clear—I must confess it. But what is my duty when in doubt as to my guilt—when such inward questionings occur as these: Was that a mortal sin? Did I do it at all? Or, if I did, have I confessed it before? Or, did I give full consent to it? My judgment veers round, like a weathercock when the wind is shifting its quarter, from the bitter N. of "Yes, I did" to the genial S. of "No, I didn't." The anguish of my mind may be not a little sharpened by the conviction that the thing in question would be trying to confess; and on realizing this, I fancy that the reason of my hesitating to judge myself guilty of the sin is simply that I should not like to tell it. And yet I say to myself the next moment, "No, that is not the case. If I knew it to be mortal, I *would* tell it, in spite of the cost." Am I describing a case of scruples? Not exactly. But those to whom the question of 'doubts' is most practical are generally of the 'anxious' class who find much difficulty

in making up their consciences. However, scruples will be considered separately below.

Doubts
and Con-
fession.

To speak of doubts proper. It may be stated that a *genuine doubt* is not obligatory matter for Confession.¹ One may say more. Given that it is genuine, it is not matter for Confession at all; for Confession is for *sins*—*i.e.*, for wrong of which we are *definitely* conscious. Doubts are capable of being solved, perhaps, but not of being absolved *as such*. Our obligation, as defined by Trent, is to tell 'all mortal sins of which we are *conscious*.' Now, a state of doubt as to mortal sin produces no definite consciousness of mortal sin, but only a more or less grounded fear that we *may* have committed it.

Negative
doubt.

Of course we may be unconscious of sins simply because we have not examined ourselves, and have no views one way or another. It is simply a blank 'I don't know.' That is called a merely *negative* doubt, or complete lack of knowledge, the remedy for which is to inquire by self-examination—

¹ The Catechism issued by Pius X. for the Roman dioceses gives the following :

'*Question*. If a person is not sure of having committed a sin, must he confess it?

'*Answer*. If a person is not sure of having committed a sin, he is not obliged to confess it; but if he wishes to, he must add that he is not sure of having committed it.'

Thus it is not correct for a person who has been tempted to suicide in thought, and is not sure of having consented, to say only, '*I had thoughts of suicide*.' He should also state his *uncertainty*, or the priest will be puzzled what to conclude.

i.e., made with the *ordinary* care alone demanded of us.

Supposing that, even after examination, my mind remains as before in a simple state of ‘I don’t know,’ because I remember *nothing at all* about what happened. There is, at all events, one case in which such a *negative* doubt about mortal sin obliges me to confess—viz., when I am *clear* that I *committed* a certain definite mortal sin, but have no reason *of any kind* for concluding that I have ever *confessed* it. Here the *law* of confessing mortal sin is *certain*, yet I have no ground at all, it is supposed, for thinking that I have ever satisfied the law. So I must do so. But *in practice* this duty will seldom bind, because a purely negative doubt is not so common; that is to say, usually some sort of *evidence* will turn up in the mind for and against me which will convert the doubt into a *positive* one, of which presently.

Example. — Timidus suddenly remembers a deliberate blasphemy he once uttered years ago. Since that time he has been regularly to Confession; or, at all events, he attended a mission or retreat, when he is conscious of having taken pains to make all things straight between his soul and God. But still, he cannot remember actually mentioning that particular mortal sin. He must tell it, then? Yes, *if* he has nothing to go by. But he *has*—viz., the substantial fact that he went conscientiously into his spiritual state at the mission, and consequently that he is unlikely to

Illustration.

have forgotten so serious a sin in his Confession. That is enough to exempt him.

Unless such treatment of doubts as this were lawful, it is obvious that Confession would become an intolerable burden to anyone not possessed of a retentive memory. One cannot exact that a person should remember the fact of confessing every single sin that he may, nevertheless, have duly confessed. So, too, apart from careful general Confessions and missions or retreats, the consciousness of regular and, perhaps, frequent Confessions made with reasonable care forms a *positive ground* for solving doubts of the above description in his own favour. As a rule, if a person in this kind of doubt has the conviction, 'I'm sure I *must* have told that,' this of itself is an indirect proof of there being positive grounds for the conviction. For a strong impression of this sort cannot exist without some *cause*, although the cause may not be traceable for want of memory. And that cause constitutes a valid reason for deciding in favour of liberty.

Scruples
to be dis-
counted.

In this matter I am supposing a person with an averagely sane conscience—not a *scrupulous* person—by which I mean, not one who thinks himself scrupulous, but who has been warned that he is, whether he believes it or not. As regards the scrupulous, one may say that *their* doubts, whether negative or positive, are an exceedingly cheap commodity, and are not to be valued at more than a farthing a ton, and may be ignored accordingly—I mean, by the *sufferers themselves*. Possibly a con-

fessor might forbid such a one so much as to mention the word 'doubt,' in order to give others waiting without some chance of Sacraments.

Positive Doubt.—This means that I see reasons ^{The *positive* doubt.} *for* and *against* my guilt, or else against my duty to confess—a state of *reasoned* uncertainty. No *doubt* can produce a *certain* obligation of any sort, and an obligation that is not certain is none; so, as long as the doubt lasts, I am free. Of course, as I said above, this supposes that the doubt is honest. Some firmly-built consciences have no difficulty in deciding doubts for themselves; others, without being *decidedly* scrupulous, can get no peace from such decisions on private authority. To such common sense suggests and advises that they should mention any really troublesome doubt *as* a doubt, of course (for truth's sake), accusing themselves 'in as far as they may have been' guilty.' It is bad for the soul to be ever 'see-sawing' over doubts of conscience. We cannot prosper spiritually, any more than a country can temporarily, while there is no internal peace.

Those, moreover, have special reasons for men- ^{Frequent offenders.} tioning doubts about some kinds of sin who are wont frequently to commit *undoubted* mortal sins of that sort; for here the argument from their experience stands rather against than for them.

Again, a person who has hitherto not had ^{A caution.} occasion to test his courage in confessing sins that are very trying to tell, and now finds himself face to face with a serious doubt in that kind, certainly needs to be on his guard against his repugnance

to mention the matter, lest it impair the sincerity of his judgment as to the gravity of his guilt; whereas one who has often bravely, and perhaps unnecessarily, subjected himself to such humiliations has no cause to suspect the honesty of his doubt.

Use of
mention-
ing real
doubts.

There is a great advantage in mentioning doubts (*i.e.*, as doubts¹) in Confession. For after doing this my duty is satisfied for good and all, even if, as several *reliable* theologians teach, I become certain later on that the sin was undoubtedly and plainly *mortal*. This follows necessarily from what innumerable authorities maintain—viz., if, being in doubt as to numbers, I accuse myself of committing some mortal sin ‘six or seven times,’ and I afterwards become certain it was seven times, it is *not* binding on me to correct the error in a future Confession. Yet what have we here but the *very case in point*, for that *seventh* mortal sin was confessed as *doubtful*, and it is afterwards found to be *certain*. Besides, my whole duty—according to the Council of Trent—is to confess sins as they stand in my conscience—*i.e.*, obviously, at the time of confessing. This done, I am quit. The case just treated is not on all fours with that other one—namely, when through forgetfulness I make *no allusion at all* to a *clear offence*—for there (1) I had committed an evident mortal sin; (2) moreover, I have not strictly confessed according to *conscience*

¹ N.B.—It is never ‘safer’ to make false representations. If I doubt, I should say so.

(except in the sense that I acted in good faith), but according to memory. In my preparation I may have been fully conscious of the sin, though it escaped me when confessing; whereas in the case before us, I *have* mentioned the matter, and, moreover, have done so according as it stood in my *conscience* at the time of my Confession, which is all that the teaching of Trent requires.

SCRUPLES.

A scruple is a sort of doubt—we may describe it so by courtesy—but one of an irrational kind. ^{What is a scruple?} It would be more aptly described ‘a nervous dread of sin in our doings without solid ground’—a morbid oversensitiveness of conscience, which scents evil in everything.

St. Ignatius, in his Exercises, gives the case of a man who treads upon two straws which happen to lie *crosswise*. The saint then proposes two possible attitudes of that man’s mind towards the incident: (1) After treading, he deliberately judges that he has thereby insulted the Cross of Christ. That, adds the saint, is really an erroneous judgment, and no genuine scruple. (2) Or, again, he continues: ‘After I have trod on that cross, or have thought or done anything, a thought comes to me from without that I have sinned, and on the other side it seems to me that I have *not* sinned; but still I feel troubled about the matter—that is to say, inasmuch as I doubt, and, again, do not doubt: and this is a true scruple and temptation of the enemy.’

What is
not a
scruple?

Wrong ideas are current as to what constitutes a scruple. Ophelia thinks it a sin to play dance-music on a Sunday. That is ignorance; the remedy is instruction. Fidelis declines to go to a doubtful play. That is proper avoidance of temptation, and care not to give scandal or bad example. Sophia declines to stay gossiping with her friend Verbosa in order not to miss a part of a Mass of obligation, from the beginning to the Epistle. That is proper care to avoid even venial sin. Sister Mary Jucunda declines to leave a door open in the corridor, the Reverend Mother having expressed her wish that it shall be kept closed. That is proper zeal for perfect religious obedience. All hail to such mis-called 'scruples'!

The
nature of
a scruple.

The essence of a scruple, as seen in the second attitude of mind described by St. Ignatius, lies in *a nervousness in apprehension of sin and inability to decide favourably to oneself* in matters of right and wrong. As a result the scrupulous soul is agonizingly tossed up and down on an eternal seesaw of 'Yes, I sinned' and 'No, I didn't.' Much ignorance *may* be mixed up with this spiritual disease. Yet it does not spring from want of knowledge, but rather from want of *moral nerve* to decide sensibly and finally according to knowledge. Knowledge may be perfect, and so a scrupulous person, if asked, as a speculative question, about the rights and wrongs of the same thing which troubles him, can often give a quite decided and correct reply; but not in his own case, alas! nor, perhaps, if any respon-

sibility towards others is involved. In this condition the mind is, as it were, hypnotized by the flimsiest suggestion of the presence of sin, and is unable to give its *attention* to the strongest proofs of its non-existence.

Scruples suffered for a time—and, God knows! ^{Are scruples good?} they are suffering of a most acute kind—may serve to purify the heart and wean it effectually from all appearance of sin. They also foster humility through the state of dependence in which they place us towards our spiritual advisers. Besides, they develop confidence in God by forcing us to throw ourselves blindly upon His mercy in our dire misery. Yet, although the cross of scruples—like any other cross—may indirectly strengthen virtues and increase merit, they are not to be regarded as a proof of holiness, nor to be cultivated either as an interesting feature or as a means to sympathy.

Prolonged scruples are an evil, and every effort ^{Cure needed.} should be taken to procure a skilful spiritual physician who will gradually cure us, and reduce our sensitiveness of conscience to reasonable proportions.

Our own co-operation and help, however, is ^{We must help.} absolutely indispensable for obtaining a cure. That concurrence of ours may be summed up in the words, *docility and blind submission*.

Without these, a cure would be a miracle. ^{Remedy.} These qualities are less important when actually receiving from our confessor directions for managing our scruples than afterwards, in

moments when the scruple 'crave' suddenly returns, and seems to force us to depart from rules laid down for us. 'Then is the tug-of-war. If *then* we allow the panic to frighten us into swerving by a hair's-breadth from the prescriptions of our confessor, we are undone. 'But it is safer my way!' or 'Perhaps this is not exactly the case Father A. meant!' If such pleas are listened to, no cure is possible. Anything like obstinacy in clinging to our own ideas 'for safety' is fatal. There is *no* safety anywhere except in submitting, no danger whatever in doing so; for what is the use of a Christ-given Church if we are to be blamed at the Judgment-Seat for following the guidance of its appointed ministers! Let me suppose that the confessor were to forbid your mentioning *any sin at all* since your last Confession, however grievous you fancied it to be, and only allowed you to accuse yourself in general of 'all the sins of your life.' *You are quite safe*, even if you die a few minutes after, and any sins that really exist *are forgiven*. It is his business—not yours—if he chooses to absolve you so. 'But is it not always wrong to disobey the dictates of one's conscience? Now, in that case my conscience forced me to disobey Father A.'s direction.' The *dictates* of *your* conscience! A very 'wobbly' authority to quote just at present. You might as well deem it necessary to obey every 'dictate' of a lunatic! Your conscience is, at present, not 'all there,' however sane you be personally for the ordinary affairs of life. You

are incapable of judging for yourself, and therefore, like a ship's crew in a fog, your only safety lies in obeying the captain's orders, no matter what you think or 'feel.' That this blind submission may, for a time, prove a sort of mental martyrdom no one who knows will deny. But a worse, and a longer one, awaits the scrupulous person who is wayward and intractable in relation to his or her spiritual guide. Let these afflicted souls, called to walk upon such troubled waters, act as though they heard the voice of the Master speaking through the counsels of His minister, and saying, 'It is I; fear not.'

Devotion to the faithful Heart of Jesus—being a devotion of loving confidence in the sympathy of that most feeling Human Heart—will surely help to dissipate all vain terrors of losing Its love by sin. Our hearts are never further from sin than when they fear most the thought of falling into it.

A balm
for the
scrupu-
lous.

No. XXXVI.

GENERAL CONFESSIONS.

Defini-
tion.

A CONFESSION is called 'general' that goes over old ground already covered by past Confessions, or, more exactly, any Confession which repeats sins belonging to a period previous to my last Confession. A 'general' may be made for one's whole past life—*e.g.*, in the case of a convert to the Church who is baptized *conditionally* on reception, a doubtfully valid form of Baptism having been gone through at some period of his or her non-Catholic life; or it may be a 'general' of an intending first communicant, made from the time when the child reached the age of reason; or it may be made to cover the past year only.

Classi-
fication.

General Confessions may be (a) obligatory, or (b) merely advisable, made out of pure devotion, or (c) hurtful, and to be avoided.

(a) OBLIGATORY.

1. When
of obliga-
tion.

It is, of course, certain that, once a mortal sin has been submitted, with sorrow and purpose of amendment, to 'the power of the Keys'—*i.e.*, to absolution—it can never be necessary to repeat that sin again, nor can such repeated Confession

ever be lawfully *exacted* by anybody even on one's deathbed.¹ A general Confession, therefore, which involves this repetition, can only be of *obligation* when a bad Confession has occurred somewhere—bad, either because (a) I have knowingly and deliberately omitted a clear mortal sin committed since my last Confession, or (b) because I was *clearly conscious* in some Confession of having made *no attempt whatever* to be sorry, or to purpose amendment for a mortal sin which I confessed. In either case a bad Confession was made, and that Confession, and all Confessions that followed it, count for nothing.

Outside these cases, (a) and (b), I can never, as long as life lasts, be *obliged* to make a general Confession. Under case (b) it is necessary to guard my readers against scruples. I have assigned the obligation of making a 'general' to one who 'was clearly conscious . . . of having made no attempt to be sorry, or to purpose amendment.' We can have no special revelation to tell us that our contrition and purpose were good; but we do know that repentance from mortal sin is necessary for salvation, and that God has *promised* to give me all that is necessary to obtain it. Hence, if I have taken *ordinary* pains to secure these

¹ It would be an error for a person to consider it *necessary*, for example, to make a 'general' on starting with a new confessor. Those religious, whose rule requires general Confession at certain times or periods are in a different case, since, by accepting the rule of their *own free will*, they have ceded their liberty on this point. It forms part of the agreement.

dispositions, I have a right to consider that I succeeded in securing them, unless I can prove that it was certainly not so, which will be difficult. In other words, where I have really sought to be contrite, what I have to prove is, not that I *was* so, but that I *was not*.

How to
rectify
bad Con-
fessions.

What, in detail, has a person to do who has clearly made a bad Confession in the past? Neither the bad Confession itself, nor any other made *since* (i.e., if I realized in each case that I was making *another* bad one) counts for anything, except for a sacrilege. Hence the penitent must confess just as if he had never been to Confession at all since the time immediately *previous* to the original bad Confession. And, besides, he must accuse himself of the number of bad Confessions made, and of any bad Communions of which he may consequently have been guilty. It is certainly conceivable that, owing to some inconsistency of conscience, some of these Confessions and Communions may not have been made in consciousness of their guilty nature—an anomaly which can only be known to the individual conscience. The principle that we are not guilty of sin unless we *know* and *advert* to it *at the time* always holds good.

Of course, in rectifying bad Confessions by a general one, it is only obligatory to repeat our *mortal* sins. So that a person confronted with this painful duty is not *bound* to add to the burden by recalling all, or any, *venial* sins committed during the bad time.

To put it at the lowest, it is 'penny wise and pound foolish' to yield so far to shame or natural timidity as to deliberately conceal a known grievous sin in Confession. We can never know peace and happiness of soul till we have told the very thing we withheld, and the longer we put off the reparation, the harder and more bitter the process of reconciliation with our Lord becomes. Then, too, we should remember, when the temptation to yield to false shame seizes us, that we have put Jesus Christ to shame upon the cross by our sin, and that, therefore, it is only fair and just we should endure shame ourselves when seeking pardon at the feet of the Crucified. We may foolishly think to keep the good opinion of the priest by hiding our sin; but what if we did? *His* opinion will not help us after death at the tribunal of Christ, where all that is most hidden will be detected at a glance by His all-searching eyes. It is *His* unalterable judgment, not that of our fellow-men, that it behoves us to fear; and then, in point of fact, no priest would think anything but *well* and kindly of a poor soul thus humbling itself in order to get back to grace!

Un-
wisdom of
bad Con-
fessions.

(b) ADVISABLE OR DEVOTIONAL GENERAL CONFESSIONS.

A 'general' may be *advisable*, though not clearly obligatory, in such a case as this: A. has for some time past been leading a decidedly careless life, reckless about venial sins, sailing 'close to the wind' in the matter of grievous sins. Perhaps

2. When
merely
advisable:
example.

there is no evidence of any *distinctly* 'bad' Confessions, but he can hardly say confidently that he has always taken ordinary pains to prepare. In the meantime passions are evidently getting stronger and the will-power weaker. Prayers are much neglected, Sunday Mass 'scamped.' There is a general sense of uneasiness in the conscience. Certain serious doubts as to mortal sin are constantly turning up and disturbing him, in spite of being dismissed; and he is by no means of a fidgety or scrupulous disposition, observe! They are like some ghastly skeleton in the cupboard behind his chair, and he is ever expecting that it will pop out its gruesome head and frighten him, and remind him, with the ominous rattling of its bones, that it would certainly not be well for him to die in his present state.

Now, no one should keep such disagreeable physiological specimens in his spiritual cupboard. They must be pulled out and vigorously dealt with for good and all. That is wisdom.

In such a case a general Confession—at least, counting from the time when the careless period began—would be highly *advisable*, and would be a good way of making an entirely fresh start. Whether there be an obligation or not, it is obviously important to have everything straight behind us, or else our whole attention will be devoted to wrestling with the threatening accuser in the rear, and we shall have no energy to devote to the duties and struggles lying ahead of us. Even our temporal concerns are likely to suffer

from this division of mind, not to mention the discomfort to those around us owing to our irritability. For those who are not at peace with themselves are not likely to be at peace with their neighbours.

Devotional.—B. is not conscious of any notable carelessness in the past. But either she is seeking for some very special favour from our Lord, or is about to marry, and wishes to draw down God's special favour on her wedded life; or, *e.g.*, being Passiontide, she desires to make a big act of penance and self-humiliation in union with our Lord's ignominy unto death. These are respectable reasons of *devotion* for making a general Confession, subject, however, to what will be said in the next division.

(c) HURTFUL 'GENERALS.'

When a person is scrupulous, and knows it ^{3. When injurious.} from being constantly told as much by confessors well acquainted with him or her, a general Confession usually becomes a fatal thing. Yet, perhaps, a soul of this kind would like—or, let us say, would feel impelled 'for safety'—to make a general Confession on every available occasion. And since no confessor acquainted with the case would allow such a thing, some unsuspecting stranger-priest is resorted to, who innocently allows the tap of scruples to be turned on! And the tap sticks fast, so that 'all the king's horses and all the king's men' would be needed to turn it off again. A panic recourse

like this to general Confessions is a poor substitute for *more confidence in God*. It gives room for the heretical gibe that 'it leaves nothing to the Divine Mercy.'

It is simple madness for such to attempt a general Confession without the approval of a confessor *who knows them*.

A delusion.

Besides the scrupulous, there is that type of souls which fondly regards a general Confession as a panacea for all spiritual ills. They hail it as the hopeful dawn of a millennium of all holiness and perfection. Another 'general,' and they will cease at once to be their old faulty selves; a wonderful spiritual transformation will be instantly effected, and all things will be made new.

This is a fallacy. A general Confession may cost them less than steady, persevering effort at self-conquest, aided by usual spiritual means, but it will never serve as a *substitute* for it. Sacraments, in spite of their inherent virtue, are no charms. Without daily personal struggle against self they will not make us perfect. But then, daily personal struggle is not nearly so exciting.

No. XXXVII.

CONFESSOR AND PENITENT.

THE attitude of the penitent towards the confessor is susceptible of two faulty extremes—an excessive independence and an exaggerated dependence.

On the one side it would be a piece of self-sufficient folly for anyone to imagine that guidance in the way of God is needless, or to fancy that 'common sense' is equipment enough for one's journey to the land beyond the stars, any more than it is for mastering the natural science of astronomy; or to regard the penny Catechism (or even 'Letters on Christian Doctrine') as a sort of 'Every man his own Spiritual Director.' People are thought rash who dispense with counsel in a difficult lawsuit, or with the physician in any but everyday ailments. Still more foolhardy are they who flatter themselves that the more difficult paths of Christian holiness can be explored without the help of guides placed by the Saviour of souls in His Church for the purpose.

It need not, however, be denied that souls may differ greatly in their need of counsel—I mean as to the *amount*. To those who lead very busy, external lives, the spiritual path may prove fairly simple, and free from complications and perplexities such as may beset others who have more

leisure for reflection, or whose minds are prone to subtleties. Then some minds may be exceptionally calm and decided, some consciences very steady and clear-sighted. Others, on the contrary, may be easily agitated by currents and cross-currents, and experience difficulties from which their neighbours are comparatively free; so that the measure of dependence upon guidance will vary indefinitely. But there are few who will not feel periodically the force of the axiom, 'No one is a judge in his own cause.' For most, some instruction and direction will at times be necessary; and to those who aim at greater perfection it is quite indispensable—far more so than where there is merely a question of avoiding very obvious sins and their manifest occasions.

The
'silent
con-
fessor'
grievance.

People anxious to be guided may sometimes complain to their women friends that the priest never says a word to them in Confession, except what is needed for essential purposes of Confession and absolution, which may be nothing at all beyond assigning the penance. He adds no word of counsel, comfort, encouragement, etc.

Apart from the fact that the Sacrament of Penance is ordained for business rather than for talk, however religious, and that the reception of our Lord's grace is *quite independent* of such talk, people may be apt to forget that the average priest is not endowed with the Divine prerogative of Searcher of hearts, so as to be able to read secret desires for advice. As confessionals are very commonly arranged, the penitent can identify the

priest far better than the priest can the penitent, supposing that the priest can, or needs to, see at all. And he may be of the same mind as À Kempis: 'I have often regretted speaking; but keeping silence, seldom.' To some—foolishly or wisely—volunteered advice might prove unwelcome—perhaps be thought obtrusive. Hence, unless the penitent's avowals be such as to show a case in which the priest's *duty* as 'teacher' or as 'spiritual physician' obliges him to speak—as, of course, it often might—some sort of intimation or hint on the penitent's part may be needed, that advice, comfort, etc., are desired. Simplicity and straightforwardness in dealing with the confessor, in his further capacity of 'father,' will lead the penitent to speak first in such cases, and so to get what is wanted.

CHOICE OF CONFESSORS.

The whole spirit of the Catholic Church, as revealed in its legislation, is emphatically this: that each soul should, according to its opportunities, enjoy the most *perfect freedom* as to choice of confessors. It cannot be necessary to point out the snares to consciences that lurk in any indiscreet meddlings with that freedom, and in any avoidable limitation of it on the part of responsible persons.

To force a child—to give one example only—to confess to a priest to whom—reasonably or foolishly—it has a strong repugnance may easily result in *sacrilegious* Confessions—at least, in the

Catholic
freedom
of choice.

Evils of
restraint.

case of a timid or nervous child—unless, of course, the dread were strong enough to take away its responsibility for the sin. At all events, the child would conceive an early loathing for Confession, than which there could hardly be a greater spiritual disaster.

Priest's
feelings.

Personal consideration for priests need not weigh one feather in the balance against the higher interests of souls. It would even be dishonouring to their sacred calling, and a slur upon their zeal for the sheep of Christ—not to say upon their good sense—to suppose, or act as if one supposed, that they regarded such things from the personal standpoint of ‘feelings.’ No self-respecting priest would demean himself by showing his chagrin—even if he felt it, through frailty of human nature—because a penitent sought other advice than his, or by curiously investigating the reasons for the change; for he would know well that there might be quite good ones which, moreover, the penitent was under no obligation to explain.

The occa-
sional
confessor.

A penitent is not bound to lay open his entire soul—beyond what the exigencies of full Confession require from every one—to each stranger-priest whom he applies to casually for absolution; that fuller confidence as to non-essentials may reasonably be reserved to some regular confessor of his predilection. Otherwise it might often be necessary to enter into long, and perhaps trying, explanations such as the penitent may know from the regular adviser need not, and perhaps ought not, to be reopened.

But, of course, every confessor, whoever he be, has his own independent duty and right to exact that amount of explanation which is necessary for validly and lawfully administering the Sacrament of Penance; and he is undoubtedly the judge of such requirements. So he must be deferred to in such matters. Thus, for instance, he has a right to all details that, to his professional knowledge, alter the nature of a mortal sin—to know whether the penitent is living voluntarily in its occasion, and the like. Beyond such necessary matters a penitent is not bound to open his whole heart generally, when circumstances force him upon occasion to resort for absolution to some priest other than his regular confessor. I am speaking here of *obligations* merely.

Every
confessor
has his
rights.

On the other side, an *excess of dependence* is also possible. A person may so tie himself to the apron-strings of one only confessor as to go the length of losing necessary, or, at all events, useful, Sacraments simply because the priest of his preference cannot be got at. That reveals a want alike of faith and of common sense. It is regarding the man more than the priest, the instrument more than our Lord's precious gift, more than His good pleasure.

Apron-
strings.

The dissenter is wont to object to 'sacerdotal pretension,' because he views all intermediaries between the soul and its Saviour as obstacles hindering direct approach to Him. This, of course, is not the case in practice in genuine Catholicism. It is an obvious fallacy, as the ex-

Hin-
drance to
progress.

ample, *e.g.*, of a bridge, or representative of any kind, will show. What school of dissent can point to disciples more remarkable for their intimate union in life with Christ than a St. Gertrude or a St. Teresa? Yet these made more use of such go-betweens than most other Catholics. Yet an extravagant attachment to one only confessor might give a handle to such objectors, and become a decided hindrance to advance in our Lord's service.

A weakness.

Such exclusiveness might be tolerable for a time—*e.g.*, in recent converts who find all so new and strange at first, and perhaps so in the case of very nervous children. But it should be regarded as a weakness to be overcome, and should not be surrounded with a false halo of glory as the virtue of fidelity, or loyalty, or gratitude. To keep to a given confessor, and to feel grateful to him because he has proved a great help to our souls, and perfectly understands our failings and needs, is but sensible. But our spiritual life ought not to be wholly upset for a long time if God wills to take him out of reach. It is there that overdependence betrays itself.

Again, this disorder may show itself in a need to consult our confessor about the sheerest trifles. It would not be advisable to defer accepting some invitation to tea till we were able to ask our 'Padre' whether, being Lent, it was more perfect to take two lumps of sugar than one. Similarly, it is no part of a confessor's commission, as such, to decide temporal matters, whether literary, artistic,

financial, medical, or appertaining to millinery and dress, except when these chance to touch upon conscience. He is not called upon to make sumptuary laws and regulate fashions beyond insisting on modesty of apparel and the wrong of running up extravagant bills that must long remain unpaid, nor to arrange *menus* beyond teaching temperance. In spiritual matters, too, it would be an exaggeration to miss my Communion merely because I forgot to ask permission after absolution, according to my usual humble, but by no means necessary, practice; for whatever may have been the case before absolution, I have a right to Communion after it.

There is no call to discuss the exceptional case of a *vow* of obedience taken to a confessor, which the latter will probably be chary enough about allowing. Apart from any such vow, are penitents bound to 'obey' confessors?

Speaking technically, obedience is a virtue by which, for God's sake, we do the will of another who has legitimate authority over us, traceable to God. The claim of superiors is usually a continued, and not an occasional one. There are certain difficulties, which it is needless to discuss here, against bringing the penitent's undoubted duty of submission precisely under the virtue of *obedience* in its usual sense. But this makes no *practical* difference whatever. The penitent is strictly bound to submit to the confessor's judgment while he places himself deliberately under his jurisdiction as a legitimate spiritual judge :—

'Obedience' to confessors.

1. In all that the confessor judges to be necessary for the due administration of the Sacrament in the penitent's case.

The priest is a Christ-appointed judge in the secret court of conscience, though the judicial capacity is closely blended with the *paternal*, and this at once distinguishes the confessional from an earthly court of justice. He is seated there in his own (ministerial) right, and, always subject to the ruling of the Church and the accepted teaching of Catholic theology, has authority to decide what his duty requires of him. So the penitent, while placed by his own act under that authority, must submit to it, or, if the word be preferred, 'obey' it. But he is not debarred from transferring his cause to another priestly tribunal, and he may follow the new judgment lawfully without reference to the former one even should the two judgments be contradictory the one to the other.

'When
con-
fessors
differ.'

But how can such contradiction arise, if the Catholic Church be, in truth, an infallible guide in morals? The Church is certainly infallible corporately, and so is its Supreme Head when teaching the faith or morals to the whole Church. But an individual priest, or even Bishop, is not. He, like another, may be less well informed; and, even though perfectly informed as to general principles governing an individual problem of conscience proposed to him, he may fail to apply those principles correctly. Besides, just as in civil and criminal law two first-rate lawyers may differ concerning some 'nice point' not determined

by a judicial ruling, so in matters of conscience two able priests may disagree in points verging upon the very border-line between right and wrong, which the Church has not settled by its authoritative sentence.

To, take an example. I ask my confessor Example. whether a certain action on my part, having an appearance of participation in the worship of a non-Catholic sect, is really unlawful. Father A. says it is, while Father B. does not feel obliged to forbid it, and leaves me free. There is no disagreement here as to *principle*, such as non-Catholics so often notice amongst their own ministers. Both Fathers are agreed that a Catholic may not take part in non-Catholic worship. But, weighing up all the circumstances of my case, one priest may differ from another in his judgement as to their significance and their bearing upon the principle.

Where the advantage of being a Catholic comes Advantage of being a Catholic. in, is here—that *I* shall not be called to an account for any error of judgment that is made. So, although an individual priest has no prerogative or infallibility, he is *for me practically* infallible—*i.e.*, in the modified sense that I shall not sin before God by following his judgment. Christ our Lord gives me His Bishops and Priests as guides. If I go by them in the spirit of childlike faith and openness, I am safe. If they culpably fail in their duty, that is not my affair, but one lying between them and Him, whose representatives they are. ‘Obey your prelates, and be subject

to them; for they watch as being to render an account of your souls.'¹

Prudence
necessary.

2. Outside matters connected with the actual administration of the Sacrament of Penance, what is the nature of my duty as to adopting the confessor's *advice* and *spiritual guidance*? Here *obedience* does not appear to enter at all. Does this mean that I need take no notice of his counsel and direction and judge for myself? *By no means!* But it is rather the important (and much underrated) virtue of *Prudence* that comes into play. And one may *sin* against this virtue just as one may against any other. Thus, a very scrupulous person is much to blame for violating rules prescribed by the spiritual physician for the cure of his spiritual 'influenza.' Gravest injury to the soul may follow such rashness; and just as we are forbidden to incur serious *bodily* injury without reason or need, so we are bound to be at least as careful with our souls. In an acute case of scruples, however, *grave* sins—at all events—of imprudence, will rarely be committed *in practice*, because the panic-stricken victim will often not be accountable for his or her actions.

Attach-
ment to
con-
fessors.

'Is it wrong to be fond of one's confessor?' asks Sempronia. That people may be 'silly' over confessors, and allow the human element to prevail undesirably in spiritual relations, goes without saying. Gratitude—which is more fully described as love of gratitude—is a virtue, and part of St. Paul's terrible indictment against the pagans

¹ Heb. xiii. 17.

of Rome is that they were 'without affection.' When, therefore, a soul has been signally helped—perhaps safely guided through very great trials and dangers—gratitude to the confessor is nothing less than a reasonable duty. Lack of it would argue a defect. But, human nature being what it is, care will sometimes need to be taken lest thankfulness degenerate into sentimental foolishness, and attachment become inordinate.

And a good test of this point would seem to consist in an honest answer to the question: Does my whole soul become a prey to confusion or melancholy day-dreaming when circumstances oblige me to confess for a time to some other priest? Do I think and act almost as if no advice would be worth having unless given by my chosen Padre, and no absolution of much account except his? If this, or the like, be my case, then my attachment appears to be insufficiently controlled within rational bounds. It is not merely that I 'feel' the privation of a much-valued guide. That is not only natural, but even becoming; but it is that this 'feeling' has got out of hand to the point of hampering my spiritual life, and manifesting itself in tangible faults. For am I not seeking the human instrument rather than our Lord and His Will, and lingering idly over the *means* instead of pushing on towards the *end*?

Another drawback, attached to admitting an excess of the personal element into dealings with our confessor, might be that our spiritual relations

Where
silliness
comes in.

'Personal'
element
to be
avoided.

will be liable to all the vicissitudes of ordinary human friendships. A 'snub,' for example, or a piece of plain speaking about my faults, which may be well deserved, or at least good for me, is likely to result in a personal quarrel, instead of being taken as a humiliation, or useful hint, sent me by our Lord's Providence for my spiritual profit, and as an antidote to my vanity, self-love, oversensitiveness, or blindness to my own shortcomings.

Fixed
confessor.

Those who are anxious to have their bodily health well looked after generally keep to one doctor, who, knowing their constitution by constant experience, is better able to give good advice. The same holds, in the main, with regard to the treatment of the soul. Hence common sense will suggest to any soul that is anxious to advance in the service of our Lord the advisability of having *one fixed confessor* to whom its state is thoroughly known. But some people's lives necessitate frequent change of place, and then, though they may not move about, perhaps the fixed confessor does. This state of things brings in the distinction between a confessor and a director with a big D! How far does this distinction merit to be respected? No doubt it may at times arise from whim and caprice. There may be some adopting it who, if they just made up their fastidious minds, would easily find half a dozen priests within reach quite equal to following them in any upward flight of spirituality that they are likely to take. Nothing is needed

but a little self-control and a good will to 'settle down.'

On the other hand, no doubt there are other souls with special characters or peculiar difficulties for whom it would prove a serious burden to 'open out' to any confessor unacquainted with their antecedents, and to have to lay bare all the ins and outs of their consciences thoroughly enough to put the priest in a position to guide them wisely. Then, too, exceptionally sensitive consciences might be completely thrown off their balance by a change of treatment; and, fearing this possibility, they may rightly prefer to reserve fuller revelations for one priest who knows all about them, while they resort to other confessors, as necessity forces them, merely to get absolution for definite sin, and with a view to Holy Communion. In this they could not be said to exceed at all that wide measure of liberty which the Church allows, and even wishes, for their greater spiritual comfort.

But they must plainly understand that liberty is limited by the essential requirements of our Lord's institution of Penance. The fact that they have a permanent confessor, or director, in no way diminishes the right of every other confessor to whom they may apply upon occasion. He, as has been said, has his independent claim to such knowledge as he knows to be necessary for the proper administration of the Sacrament to the soul here and now placed under his legitimate jurisdiction.

For instance, a penitent, in the absence of the

Reason-
able diffi-
culties.

A caution.

Example.

regular confessor, might prefer to reserve some grievous sin for the latter rather than tell it to an unknown stranger to whom they are confessing. But one cannot *halve* Confessions in this way. No matter who the priest is, we may not keep back a *clear* mortal sin committed since our last Confession. So if we do not mean to tell it to the chance confessor, we must put off our confession, and (saving acts of *perfect* contrition) remain in sin till the regular confessor is at hand—a rather mad proceeding. St. Augustine tells us: God has promised to forgive us if we repent, but He has not promised to give us our own time for doing it. In his day the luxury of special directors was probably rare, or he might perhaps have added that neither are we promised a director as travelling companion.

No. XXXVIII.

THE SEAL OF SECRECY.

OUR Lord does not ask from us what is morally impossible. Consequently, while commanding us to confess even our most hidden mortal sins, He has most zealously protected such sacred confidences by the strictest law of inviolable *secrecy*, which binds the priest (primarily) under pain of most grievous sin, in every case, in all circumstances, and at every personal peril, and, moreover, as strictly with regard to *venial* sins presented for absolution as in the case of mortal ones. Necessity
of secrecy.

I am not concerned here with tracing the history of sacramental secrecy in the Catholic Church—beyond saying that it reveals, not, indeed, an ever-diminishing laxity—for secrecy has ever been insisted on—but an ever-increasing *severity* in precautions against any penitent being one tittle the worse on account of having been to Confession.

The secret of the confessional exceeds in strictness every other form of secret known to men. For even the *confidential* secret attached to certain lay professions—the highest of all *natural* secrets—is not absolutely free from *possible* exception—*i.e.*, under some wholly unusual and rarely-to-be-veri- No ex-
ceptions
allowed.

fied conditions ; whereas there are *no* circumstances, conceivable or inconceivable, in which it could be anything but grievously sinful and sacrilegious to violate the secrecy of Confession. As the example of St. John Nepomucene, Canon of Prague, and Martyr, reminds us, a cruel death must even be preferred to revelation. Hence that heroic victim of King Wenceslaus IV.'s jealous curiosity concerning his saintly Queen's Confessions is commonly represented with his forefinger raised to his lips in token of silence.

Range of
secrecy.

Although these Letters are not intended for the clergy, it may be well, for the encouragement of those especially who have not been accustomed all their lives to the confessional, to point out the *wide extent* of this duty of secrecy.

No sin, mortal or venial, presented in the Sacrament of Penance may ever be revealed, either during the penitent's life or after death.

No hint may be given which could lead to a suspicion that a sin had been confessed.

Nothing may be done outside the confessional, saving by the penitent's *express* and *absolutely free* consent, on the strength of knowledge gained by Confession, or that would make Confession unpleasant to the penitent. In a word, a confessor must demean himself in every way as if he had never heard the Confession. The secret of Confession is God's secret ; and no human authority, not even the authority of the Pope, has any power over it.

Cases are conceivable in which it might appear

that great evils would be left unremedied owing to this preservation of the secret. Let us suppose that a priest's servant acknowledged to him in Confession a confirmed habit of drunkenness, the result of stealing liquor from his cellar. He cannot start keeping that cellar carefully locked in consequence. The priest has *nothing to do with the consequences* of our Lord's institution. He Who appointed Confession will watch over its working, since Eternal Wisdom knew exactly how it would work out in practice, in every imaginable case or combination of circumstances.

In going to Confession penitents should bear in mind the priest's position as regards secrecy, and not expect him to volunteer any reference to what they have told him in former Confessions. If for purposes of counsel the penitent wishes to refer back, he should openly take the initiative. Again, when a priest has been summoned to attend a sick-bed of some member of the family, all inquisitive inquiries, *after* he has seen the patient, as to what has transpired should be rigidly avoided, however zealous the intention. For instance: 'I hope he told you about the *drink*, Father?' That is grossly out of order. Or again, *loquitur* an anxious mother after Tommy's first Confession to Father A.: 'I hope my boy confessed his wicked lies, Father?' Such grave indiscretions will probably receive, as they undoubtedly deserve, a sharp 'snub.'

Just as the confessor will have to leave *entirely* to our Lord's Providence over His own Sacraments

Consequences left to God.

Lay duty towards secrecy.

Leave
the con-
fessional
to God.

any problems that may arise out of Confessions, so must other people. It is a golden rule, whatever one's responsibility or anxiety for others, *never to meddle in the most distant manner with confessional affairs.*

Penitent's
duty
towards
secrecy.

Has the penitent any duty towards secrecy with regard to what the priest says in Confession? Though this point has been referred to partially in the previous volume of Letters, it may be well to repeat a little. It is true that the penitent is not bound by the severe law of *sacramental* secrecy as regards his *own* Confession; for that law is made for the benefit of the penitent (not of the confessor), and may be ceded at will. Still, the penitent is bound by the rules of *natural* secrecy not to speak of anything said in Confession that would in any way injure the priest; for the confessor has at least the same rights in this respect as Dick, Tom, and Harry, and something more, because what would not notably discredit the gentlemen aforesaid, might, though a trifle *in itself*, seriously reflect upon the sacred character of the priest.

'Father X.
said,' etc.

There are few priests, I fancy, who have not heard themselves quoted for doctrinal sayings in the confessional which never so much as entered their heads, nor that of any ordinary sane being. Yet, owing to the *seal*, a priest is helpless, and cannot defend himself. And this imposes an additional duty of honour upon the penitent not to be indiscreet, still less to indulge in fanciful 'embroideries' of priestly sayings.

'Priest-talk' is often fraught with considerable mischief.

But the lay person may be *strictly bound to the seal of sacramental secrecy* in the case of *another's* Confession—*e.g.*, when he overhears it, whether *accidentally* or of *set sacrilegious purpose*—and precisely in the same way as the priest. It is *God's* secret, and must be kept for ever, and at all costs.

Where
secrecy
binds
laity
strictly.

The extreme severity of the law binding the confessor to secrecy must not be distorted by ignorance. No one can *make* to be a sacramental secret that which is not so in the nature of things. An intending bride, let us imagine, runs into her Padre's confessional when he is not occupied, and tells him—'*mind* you, as a *dead* secret'—that she is just engaged to be married, and, moreover, mentions the name of the presumably happy bridegroom. 'I tell you *that*,' adds the young lady, '*as if I were speaking to you in Confession.*' That will not make the information a sacramental secret, not because the priest is unwilling to have it so, but simply because it *cannot be, in the nature of things*. There is no question here of *Confession* in the matter. Of course, unless the priest happen to know, *e.g.*, that the bride has told some half a dozen *other* people, also 'as a dead secret,' he would treat the matter as an ordinary *natural* secret, and perhaps, on account of the surrounding circumstances, even as a *confidential* one; but no one can make it a *confessional* secret merely by mentioning it to a priest seated in a

Foolish
notions
about the
'seal.'

confessional box, or by telling him to consider it as such. At that rate, an invitation to lunch, given inappropriately enough in the confessional, would fall under the seal of Confession. Or, again, a warning that the church was on fire, given in a confessional, must be disregarded by the priest in charge (saving the *express* and *free* leave of the informant) until flames and smoke gave *independent* testimony to the fact!

No. XXXIX.

SATISFACTION.

AFTER we have told our sins in Confession, the priest assigns us some devotional practice by way of a 'penance.' This *penance* we are bound to accept, and to fulfil afterwards. If by chance it should be one of great difficulty to us from some cause unknown to the priest—an unlikely event—we are not forbidden to represent the difficulty to the confessor respectfully in order that, if he judges fit, another penance may be substituted by him.

The obligation to fulfil the 'penance' is, speaking generally, one binding under *mortal* sin, but that supposes that the penance is, as modern penances go, a notable one, as, *e.g.*, five decades of the rosary would certainly be. If, *after intending at the time of Confession* to say my penance, I were afterwards to deliberately omit it, I should sin by this; but that would not destroy the worth of my Confession, though if the omission amounted to a *mortal sin*, I should fall once more from the state of grace acquired by the Confession.

The 'penance' is for making satisfaction to God for the sins confessed and remitted—at all events, as to their *guilt*.

The 'penance.'

Its obligation.

Object of the penance.

Twofold
effect of
a sin.

But every sin involves *two* effects: *guilt* before God, and *punishment*. These need not always disappear together. If my repentance be very perfect — *e.g.*, when I have the *highest grade* of contrition — then both guilt and punishment are certainly removed together. But this ‘clean sweep’ will not always occur; so the penance is meant to *contribute*, at all events, towards paying off the debt of temporal punishment that may still remain due after the *guilt* of sin, and God’s consequent displeasure at it, has ended with absolution.

Forms of
penance.

Whatever debt the penance itself may have failed to satisfy, that I may wisely try to wipe out by voluntary acts of penance, either *spiritual* ones — *e.g.*, hearing Mass, acts of sorrow, *renewal* of sorrow for sins of my past in future Confessions, gaining indulgences, resignation under trials, etc. — or else *bodily* penances — *e.g.*, fasting or abstinence, self-denial in comforts, bearing pain and labour, etc.

Atoning
virtue
of a
‘penance.’

It might seem absurd to imagine that a few prayers, taking us but a few minutes to recite devoutly, should go any way towards satisfying the justice of God. But we must remember that such acts, *when imposed in the Sacrament*, derive an exceptional atoning value from the atonement of Jesus Christ, which the Sacrament applies to our souls *for the express purpose of undoing the effects of our personal sins*. Thus a Litany, or a few *Paters* and *Aves*, recited *as a sacramental penance*, have, through Christ’s merits, a power of satisfying God altogether out of proportion to their face value,

and far greater than they would possess if said independently as a penitential act of devotion of our own choosing.

The above leads to the subject of *forgetting* Forgetting one's penance. *penances*. Two forms of forgetfulness are possible—
(a) I may forget *what it was*, or (b) I may forget to *perform it*.

(a) If I forget what it was and am still with the priest, let me ask him to repeat it. If I have left the confessional, I am not bound to make a fuss in order to get to him again. I can ask about it next time, though in all probability the priest will not remember what he told me.

There is no use in doing something else instead. 'Something else instead.' This would, of course, show good-will, and would have some value of satisfaction, like any other act of devotion performed spontaneously, but it would lack that higher value which the Sacrament imparts to the actual penance enjoined me.

(b) Though I know what penance was given me, I may forget to say it.

How does this affect my Confession? Neither Absolution not spoiled. in case (a) nor in case (b) is the absolution *undone*. The Confession still remains substantially good as to the forgiveness of the *guilt* of sin, always supposing that I *meant* to perform the penance, but it is shorn of its perfection through neglect of the satisfaction. The result is that, whatever amount of temporal punishment I should have paid off by doing the 'penance,' this amount will still need to be paid either in this world, or more heavily in Purgatory.

Con-
ditions of
fulfilment.

No time can be fixed within which a penance must be fulfilled unless the confessor expressly fixes one, or the very nature of the penance implies one. It appears most *fitting*, however, that it be performed at all events before the next Confession, if its character admits of this. The obligation to perform it never ceases merely through lapse of time.

Unless the priest expressly states otherwise, the devotional practice prescribed need only be performed *once*. Thus, 'Say for your penance *five* "Hail Marys" ' means, 'Say the five *once*, not every day.'

People should carefully attend to, and understand, the penance enjoined before leaving the confessional. If they cannot hear, they should say so, and all worry afterwards will be saved.

A mis-
under-
standing.

A boy was once observed on a Saturday evening rushing up and down the pavement in front of a Catholic church where Confessions were being heard. 'What *are* you after, Tom?' exclaimed the beadle. 'Doing my penance, sir,' replied the boy without stopping. 'A queer penance it looks!' rejoined the official. 'Well!' shouted the lad, 'and didn't the Father *tell* me to say five "Our Fathers" *running*?' A slight misunderstanding.

It is an excellent practice, though not a duty, to say one's penance *immediately* after leaving the confessional, and so complete the Sacrament in all its parts.

No. XL.

METHOD OF CONFESSION.

1. *Preparation.*—(a) Ask God's help to make a good Confession—*i.e.*, to know your sins, to repent sincerely, and to confess them rightly.

(b) Examine your conscience.

(c) Rouse yourself to sorrow *and purpose of amendment*. Make acts of contrition thoughtfully and earnestly *before* entering confessional.

2. *In the Confessional.*—*Shut the door well*—if there is one.

(a) Beg the priest's blessing : ' Pray, Father, give me your blessing, for I have sinned.' Then, without waiting, it is usual for the penitent to say the first half of the *Confiteor* ('I confess to Almighty God,' etc., down to 'through my *most grievous* fault.'¹

(b) Of your own accord begin at once to tell

¹ The 'Catechism of Pius X,' prescribed to the Roman dioceses, gives a briefer form of the *Confiteor* for Confession, under 'The Way of Confessing,' as follows : '*I confess to God Almighty, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to all the Saints, and to you, my Father, that I have sinned.*' It does not prescribe the finishing off of the *Confiteor* after the penitent has told his sins, but a form like the one to be given presently in the text (c).

your sins. It may be *useful* to state how long it is since your last Confession, though this is not binding. *Accidentally* it might be—e.g., if I said ‘I did so-and-so *three times a week*’: for this does not of itself enlighten the priest as to the *number* of mortal sins committed altogether, unless he knows *how many weeks* have elapsed since my last Confession.

(c) When all has been told, it is *good* to add: ‘For these and all my other sins I am heartily sorry, purpose amendment, and humbly ask pardon of God, and penance and absolution of you, my spiritual Father.

(d) Listen to the penance, and to any advice the priest may offer, or *ask him* what you want to know.

(e) Make a fresh act of contrition and purpose while the priest is pronouncing the words of absolution. The priest will probably direct you to do this of himself.

N.B.—Do not go out till the priest gives you some sign that he has finished, especially if you suffer from deafness, or you may depart without absolution.

3. *After Confession*.—Say your penance, and then spend, if possible, a few minutes in thanking God for His merciful pardon.

N.B.—It is also good to preface our *preparation* for Confession with thanks for past mercies. The remembrance of these contributes alike to *sorrow* for the ingratitude of sin, and to confidence in God’s mercy.

No. XLI.

INDULGENCES.

WE saw just now, when treating of Satisfaction, ^{Place of} that, although the penance received in Confession, ^{Indul-} went towards satisfying the debt of temporal ^{gences.} punishment due on account of sin, yet it did not necessarily go the *whole* way, and this in spite of its deriving exceptional satisfactory virtue from its connexion with the Sacrament of Penance. The *degree* in which our Lord wills to apply His atoning merits in a given instance is not revealed to us.

There may therefore remain over heavy debts of temporal punishment which the comparatively light penances now in use in the Church cannot satisfy. In the earlier centuries of the Church—when the discipline of Public Penance prevailed—the fervour of Christians disposed them to undergo very long and severe penances—at all events, for *public* sins—which might last for long periods. This was the form in which they fulfilled the Satisfaction connected with the Sacrament of Private Confession.

But, of course, this particular *way* of doing Satisfaction was an ecclesiastical arrangement,

not an essential feature of the Sacrament of Penance as instituted by Christ. As the centuries advanced, the Church judged it better to abolish this system of public Penance which she had herself established rather by way of response to the penitential zeal of her children than as an imposition of her own.

Need of
Indul-
gences.

Out of this change arose the necessity of satisfying the justice of God by some other means. This means was the system of Indulgences. I do not mean that the root-idea of an Indulgence dates only from the abrogation of public Penance. For, as the writings of Tertullian and St. Cyprian show, a penitent might receive 'letters' (*libellus pacis*) from some confessor of the faith awaiting death which were to plead for him with his Bishop, who, if assured of his contrite dispositions, remitted the rest of the penance. The merits of a holy martyr's sufferings were transferred to his account so as to cancel his debt of Satisfaction.

In view of the 'Communion of Saints'—such seems to have been the underlying principle of this primitive usage—all the faithful formed one united family with Christ for its Head, and shared spiritual goods in common, according to their need, even as the Christians in Apostolic days shared their temporal possessions. And just as, even with us, some offending child in a family might be let off chastisement due 'in honour,' as we might put it, of some distinguished feat or success achieved by another member of the house-

hold, so the early Christian penitent's debt of penance was held to have been compensated for by the heroic sufferings of his martyr-brother for the name of Jesus. He was deemed to have satisfied God's justice by proxy.

In ancient Rome we find a somewhat similar ^{A kindred pagan usage.} notion contained in the privilege accorded to the chastity of a Vestal Virgin, by which she might claim the pardon of a criminal whose path she chanced to cross on his way to execution. If there be anything here beyond a pure coincidence, it only illustrates the truth that the Church of Christ, being a living organism animated by the Spirit of God, takes up from her surroundings whatever there is of truth and goodness, purifies it, and assimilates it into her own system.¹

Still, the wider use of indulgences, as we know ^{Power 'of the Keys.'} it, is certainly a development of later centuries. It is a more extended application of the prerogative bestowed by Christ Himself on Cephas, 'in the region of Cesarea Philippi': 'To thee will I give the *keys of the kingdom of heaven*: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and *whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosened also in heaven*.'² Heaven remains closed to all who, though released from the guilt of sin, still need to satisfy debts of temporal

¹ For an eloquent and able exposition of the doctrine of development here involved, see 'Religion of the Plain Man,' by Father R. H. Benson, pp. 69, 89.

² St. Matt. xvi.

punishment arising from that guilt 'to the last farthing.' By the power of 'loosing' exercised in the grant of indulgences, a power vested in its fulness in the successors of Cephas occupying the Holy See, the closed gates of the heavenly kingdom are opened to the sincere penitent. The 'power of the Keys' is brought into play not only by absolution from sinful guilt, but also by remission of punishment due to sin after the removal of the guilt.¹

The
Church's
treasury.

The inexhaustible riches of Christ's atoning merits lie in the keeping of the Church as in some rich treasury. They were bequeathed, after His ascent into heaven, by the Head of the Church to His bride² on earth, to be administered and dispensed according to the needs of her spiritual household, the faithful.

When she grants an indulgence on certain devotional conditions, she draws from the all-atoning wealth of her Spouse's merits for payment of the debts of satisfaction contracted by her children. The merits of the Divine Eldest Brother thus compensate for the deficiencies of ourselves, made His younger brothers and sisters by the grace of 'adoption of sons.'

Partial
indul-
gences.

The Church draws from this limitless fund in different measures. There are *partial* indulgences

¹ So a child may be forgiven its fault and received back into ordinary favour by a parent, and yet still forfeit some 'treat' by way of reparation. To remit the *latter* would be like an indulgence.

² Ephes. v. 23-30.

—say, of a hundred or three hundred days. What does this mean? It means that when an early Christian did public penance for such periods of time, he satisfied (through Christ) for his sins to a certain extent. What that extent is the Church does not know, for God has not revealed it to her. But she intends to apply to us that particular measure (whatever it may be) from the merits of Christ. Thus, an indulgence of fifty days does not mean that fifty days' Purgatory are remitted, but that the same amount of temporal punishment can be escaped by gaining the said indulgence as the early Christian would, in God's knowledge, have escaped by doing public penance for the space of fifty days.

Besides *partial* indulgences, there are *plenary* ones—those which, if gained by an individual Catholic, wipe out the *whole* debt of temporal punishment that may be due for sins the *guilt* of which has been remitted by sacramental absolution. Again, what the *amount* of the debt may be the Church does not know, for lack of revelation on the point. But whatever it may be, she draws what is *necessary*; and a person who has properly fulfilled all the conditions for a plenary indulgence is quit of all debt, and if he died on the spot would go straight to heaven without passing through Purgatory. This enables us to understand the eagerness of some to gain a plenary indulgence.

From what has been said above, one sees the absurdity of some Protestant notions about Catholic

Plenary
indul-
gences.

Protestant
fictions.

Indulgences. They regard them as *permissions to sin* !¹

Now an Indulgence can never remit the *guilt* of sin. It *supposes* sincere repentance of it, and *removal* of its guilt. But a person who wanted leave to commit sin would *desire* to sin, which is itself the guilt of sin, and therefore wholly incapacitates him for receiving an Indulgence !

Not a
'white-
washing.' Again, some Protestants think that an Indulgence is an act by which some priest or other white-washes a Catholic who has done wrong, and relieves him of the spiritual consequences of his wrong-doing ! He makes it 'all right' for him ! Now, apart from the little fact that no priest has power to give an Indulgence *of himself*, nothing but sincere repentance and purpose of amendment can rid a soul of the guilt of sin.

'Sale of
indul-
gences.'

It is alleged by controversialists that at some periods Catholic ecclesiastics have *sold* Indulgences for money. If Tetzcl, or any other individual, did this he sinned greatly, after the style of Simon Magus, and departed from the teaching of his Church, which never sanctioned any such hideous iniquity. It is hardly necessary to enter into that controversy here. But is an Indulgence wrong

¹ Thus, in an account of the laying of the foundation-stone of the Westminster Cathedral, on which occasion the Cardinal Archbishop gave an Indulgence of one hundred days, a leading London 'daily' explained that the indulgence was *to be reckoned from* the day of the ceremony, obviously understanding that the faithful were to have some sort of 'a good time' from that date till the expiration of the term.

because some may have used their free wills to *abuse it*? The Name of God, the grace of God would be wrong—money and enjoyment would be wrong—at this rate; for many make a bad use of all four.

But as to the *fact* of such alleged simony. It is ^{Alms at a jubilee.} *not* simony to assign, as a condition for gaining an Indulgence, the giving of an alms for a religious purpose. Such a purpose is good and virtuous, and the furthering of it a meritorious deed. That is entirely different to *selling* an Indulgence; for, to sell, one must institute a comparison between the thing and the money given. The Church was never so mad as to suppose that the benefit of Christ's atoning merits would possibly be valued in £ s. d.! Thus, for gaining the plenary Indulgence at a time of 'jubilee,' one of the assigned conditions usually is to give to a particular fund an alms for the poor. That, again, is a pious work much praised in the Bible, but does not involve *selling* the jubilee Indulgence! It is only those who—like the mostly evil-living Reformers of the sixteenth century—are interested in picking holes in the Catholic Church, who would maintain such a calumny, or indulge in such ignorant confusion of thought.

No. XLII.

ABOUT GAINING INDULGENCES.

Con-
ditions
for a
plenary
indul-
gence.

PLENARY indulgences, or *full* remission of temporal punishment remaining due, are usually to be gained on the following conditions: (1) Confession; (2) Communion; (3) prayer for the Holy Father's intentions, for which the recital, *e.g.*, of five 'Our Fathers,' five 'Hail Marys,' and five *Glorias* would suffice in point of length. When a Plenary Indulgence is announced in church as obtainable on a certain feast or ecclesiastical occasion, 'on the usual conditions,' the above three are the conditions referred to.

As regards condition (1), those who are accustomed to confess *some time in every week* need not repeat the Confession for each plenary indulgence occurring in the week. The one weekly Confession suffices. This applies to *all* the faithful. With regard to those who carry out the present Holy Father's ardent wishes by practising *daily* Communion, they are not bound to the above condition of weekly Confession (Decree, February 14, 1906). The Communion and the prayers for the Pope must be *repeated* for *each* plenary indulgence.

Partial indulgences are indulgences, *e.g.*, of fifty, one hundred, three hundred days, etc. If we want to secure these indulgences, we must fulfil literally the conditions on which they are granted in each case (see 'Raccolta' of indulgences, English version.) Good faith in making mistakes will not serve us. The same amount of temporal punishment is remitted by a partial indulgence that would have been remitted to an early Christian performing public penance for the period named in the indulgence.

Details
about
partial
indul-
gences.

ROSARIES.

The commoner forms of rosary devotions are: Rosaries.

- (a) The ordinary rosary of our Lady, consisting of five decades of 'Hail Marys' (small beads), each preceded by one 'Our Father' (large beads), and followed by a 'Glory be to the Father,' etc. (space between last small bead of one decade and the next large bead). The chaplet thus formed, when said three times over, constitutes a full rosary. The fifteen mysteries of the life of our Lord and our Lady (see ordinary Prayer Books) may be meditated in turn during the recital of the decades.¹
- (b) Rosary of the Seven Dolours, or Sorrows of Mary, for which see Prayer Books.

¹ This meditation is necessary for gaining the set of rosary indulgences given by the Dominican Fathers, but not in the case of the ordinary Papal and Brigittine indulgences, nor of the exceptionally rich indulgences which, *e.g.*, the Pères de la Croix (or Pères Croisiers) can give.

Indulgences Attached.

Priests having 'faculties' for the purpose can attach many indulgences to rosaries and to many other pious objects. It is a great pity that people using these pieties should miss the benefit of indulgences—for themselves or for the souls of the dead—through not having their beads indulgenced, or 'blessed,' as it is somewhat loosely expressed. For many things can be blessed that cannot be indulgenced—*e.g.*, children, houses, food, railways and ships, etc.

How
indul-
gences are
forfeited.

Observations.—A rosary *loses* its indulgences in the following cases: (a) If sold. Besides, it is forbidden to sell an *already* blessed object, even in respect of its material value. (b) If lent, *meaning* the other party 'to gain the indulgences. He cannot, and the lender loses them. (c) If wholly, or to a notable extent, *changed*. The renewal of, say, four or five beads is allowable; also the wire, or chain, may be *wholly* renewed, as the indulgence is attached to the *beads* only.

Material
for beads.

If beads are of a very fragile material like *thin* glass or brittle shells, they cannot be indulgenced. *Thick* glass beads are not open to this objection, and may often be more lasting than some wooden ones.

APPENDICES.

I.

‘THE DOCTRINE OF INTENTION.’¹

A MISCHIEVOUS TRACT.

To confer a Sacrament validly the minister must have ‘intention,’ which signifies that, in administering the rite, the minister must in his own mind mean to carry out that which the Church executes when performing that rite. Conceivably, he may not believe aright himself concerning the Sacrament he confers ; in other words, as was said in the body of this book, he may be of unsound faith, even to the point of heresy. Yet, whatever be the error of his personal views, he must at least mean generally to ‘do that thing which the Church of Christ does.’ And if he does so mean the Sacrament is good.

The anonymous tract to which I refer purports to cast doubt wholesale upon the entire Catholic sacramental system precisely on the ground of the aforesaid condition for validity defined by the Church. It argues thus : ‘Intention’ on the minister’s part is essential for a valid Sacrament. But evidently no one can possibly *verify* its presence. So no one can ever be sure of having received a valid Sacrament.

¹ ‘Doctrine of Intention—as held by the Roman Catholic Church. Am I really a Catholic?’ See the answer, ‘The Doctrine of Intention,’ by J. Gerard, S.J., reprinted from *The Month*. C.T.S.

The author writes, as it were, from the standpoint of a Catholic, and as if he belonged to the Catholic Church, which he styles 'Roman.' He assumes the tone of a sincerely perplexed Catholic. Yet, while one cannot feel absolutely sure that he is *not* a Catholic of a sort, certain of his expressions and the spirit of his writing strongly suggest the Anglican, or else a Catholic with an imperfect grasp of the faith, and unfamiliar with its practices and phraseology. The argument that Sacraments are unreliable because the minister's mental 'intention' cannot be verified by the receiver is extended by the writer even to ordinations of Bishops and priests, and so purports to discount the reliability of the Sacraments at their source. Thus he writes: 'For anything that can be proved to the contrary, one half of our Bishops and priests are still laymen; and the awful misery of it is that the faithful cannot discover who they are. Oh, what a sandy foundation we are all building upon! When I think of this wretched state of things I am almost driven to become a Protestant, although my Church has taught me to hate the very name. I am afraid I shall turn infidel and believe nothing at all.'

Here one might suggest to him, in passing, that, considering the precise cause of his trouble, it would be more logical to turn infidel at once, unless, indeed, either there be some occult art for inspecting the inner minds of Protestant ministers in particular when these are engaged in conferring Baptism and the 'Lord's Supper,' or else ministers of Protestantism happen to be dispensed from all religious meaning in their ministrations.

It is a pity that the author did not take the obvious and straightforward course of submitting his difficulty to some trained theologian before rushing into print and

possibly disturbing other consciences as ill-instructed as his own appears to be. Had he done this, or—supposing that he did it—had he made better use of his opportunity, he might have been shown that, *for the very reason* that the faithful could not possibly test the mental attitude of ministers, Christ our Lord, the faithful Shepherd of souls, must have provided us with some better security for the efficiency of His Sacraments than the result of personal investigation into that which of its very nature defies investigation.

This, however, is not by any means the weakest spot in the objector's armour. For, while professing to explain 'intention' '*as held by the Roman Catholic Church,*' he shows the most curious ignorance as to what Catholic theology understands by 'intention' in the bestowal of Sacraments. We read (p. 5): 'Any priest whilst performing his sacred office may have a sudden seizure of lumbago, rheumatism, gout, toothache, neuralgia, or any other painful affection, which would almost necessarily divert his attention and fix it upon the seat of pain, in which case the words of the office may be correctly repeated, but the necessary *intention* would be absent, and invalidity result.'

At this rate one of our Judges in the Law Courts ceases to have the mental 'intention' of fulfilling the functions which the State assigns to him because during some long and tedious trial he happens to nod his 'forty winks.'

Let us notice the confusion of ideas revealed in the last quotation. '*Intention*' is there confounded with continued *attention*, and *failure* of 'intention' with an unavoidable distraction—so harmless a one as not even to interfere with rendering 'the words correctly.' According to this the priest, to save invalidity, is bound to

keep the attention of his mind concentrated during the whole rite with a sort of mathematical continuity, so that the smallest gap will render Christ's ordinance null and void. It would seem, then, that the All-Wise Author of Sacraments, while choosing human beings for their administrators, has made their practical worth to hang upon a human impossibility. For, as St. Thomas holds, it is doubtful whether most men can say even one *Pater* without some shade of involuntary inattention.

Our perplexed writer appears to claim Cardinal Bellarmine as a fellow-sympathizer on account of that able theologian's statement: 'Nor can anyone be certain *with the certainty of faith* that he receives a true Sacrament, since a Sacrament cannot be made without the intention of the minister, and no one can see another's intention.' What the Jesuit Cardinal said some centuries ago is entirely in accord with the teaching of the Church; but it will not help the contention of our anonymous tract-writer. To say that the fact of my having validly received a given Sacrament cannot be a *matter of Divine faith* to me is one thing, and sufficiently obvious, since Divine revelation does not expressly declare that I, A. B., have here and now validly received it; to doubt that I have received it is quite another. For the same thing is true of other spiritual matters. Thus, I can have no certainty *of faith* as to my being here and now in the state of grace. Nevertheless, I can—supposing that I use the prescribed means—I *ought* to have such moral certainty as is needed and suffices for absolute confidence and peace of mind—what may be called a thorough *working* certainty. Without this any real spiritual activity and growth in the Christian soul would be paralysed.

The fact is, the author of this shallow tract overlooks

the real basis upon which an intelligent Catholic rests his confidence in Sacraments—viz., the vital fact that the Catholic Church governed by the successors of Cephas *is the true Church of Christ, and that it inherits His promises to be with it 'all days,' and to fortify it against 'the gates of hell.'* The very *raison d'être* which our Divine Lord assigned to His Church was to procure the salvation and sanctification of souls. Now, the Sacraments have been appointed by Him as the chief means for securing that end. Hence, in assigning this end to the Church, our Lord at the same time necessarily guarantees to her the unfailing preservation of these necessary means. The fidelity of the Divine Founder to the Church which He has built on Peter forms the best and surest guarantee that His Providence will watch over and preserve the practical efficiency of the Sacraments.

Newman, referring to the Anglican argument, 'We have true orders, therefore we belong to the Catholic Church of Christ,' said long ago that Catholics argue precisely the opposite way: 'We belong to the true Church of Christ, therefore we are in possession of true orders.'

The following passage from the 'Essays Critical and Historical' of the celebrated Oratorian (note to Essay IX.) is a masterly development of the same idea: 'It is the Church herself that vouches for our orders, while she authenticates *herself* by her Notes.¹ It is the great Note of an ever-enduring *cætus fidelium*, with a fixed organization, a unity of jurisdiction, a political greatness, a continuity of existence in all places and times, a suitableness to all classes, ranks, and callings, an ever-energizing life, an untiring, ever-evolving history,

¹ Especially the combined notes of Unity and Catholicity.

which is her evidence that she is the creation of God and the representative and home of Christianity. . . . A transmission of ministerial power ever has been and ever shall be; and *He Who so ordained will carry out His ordinance, preserve it from infraction, or make good any damage to it, because it is His ordinance*; but still that ordinance is not simply of the essence of the Church: it is no more than a separable accident and a necessary instrument. Nor is the Apostolic descent of her priests the *direct* warrant of their power in the eyes of the faithful. *Their warrant is her immediate, present, living authority*; it is the word of the Church which marks them out as the ministers of God. . . . And while she is most cautious and zealous that they be ordained aright, yet *it is sufficient in proof of their ordination that they belong to her.*'

In this passage, parts of which have been italicized, Newman is, of course, dealing chiefly with the validity of the Sacrament of Orders. But, then, the reliability of five out of the seven Sacraments obviously depends upon the reliability of that particular Sacrament.

The writer of the tract has here been treated as a Catholic, because, by calling the 'Roman' Catholic Church '*my Church*,' he clearly represents himself as one. If, however, this be a mere fiction, devised for controversial purposes, he has hardly played a fair game.

II.

CONFIRMATION GIVEN BY SIMPLE PRIESTS.

How is it that mere *appointment*, without special consecration, enables a priest to confer the Sacrament of Confirmation like a Bishop?

A priest, if delegated by the Holy See for the purpose, is a valid, though 'extraordinary,' minister of Confirmation (Decree to the Armenians). As the Catholic Catechism states, a Bishop is the usual or ordinary minister—*i.e.*, in the Latin Church. The usual theological explanation is that, in virtue merely of the presbyterate, or priest's orders, a priest receives latently—but only latently—the power to confirm. In a somewhat similar way, by mere ordination, he receives the latent power to absolve from sin, though that power is, so to say, chained up till the bestowal of 'faculties' releases it, by assigning a definite ecclesiastical area for its exercise. Without these 'faculties'—in the present order of discipline—his absolution would be wasted breath, except when given to a penitent in danger of death, at which time the Church, like a true mother, removes all restrictions.

So, too, except a priest be *appointed*, his Confirmation would be null and void. This delegation does not *give* the inherent power, but simply renders it operative. The power itself is attached to the 'character' received in priestly ordination. Benedict XIV. ventilates the question whether the right to delegate belongs to Bishops

generally. In the discipline of the Latin or Western portion of the Catholic Church, that right is reserved to the Holy See. In the Eastern Church it is certain that Confirmation is duly given by a simple priest (Benedict XIV., Constitution, *Anno Vertente*, 1759). But it is to be noticed that in any case the presbyterate exercises this power in dependence on the episcopate, for a Bishop is needed to consecrate the chrism—essential matter of the rite. This consecration is necessary for insuring *valid* administration, the contrary view having been explicitly condemned by Rome as ‘rash,’ and ‘bordering on error.’

III.

COMMUNION UNDER ONE KIND.

IT is the universal practice in the Western or Latin portion of the Catholic Church to administer Communion to the laity under the form of bread only. We have seen, when considering the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, that—given the Catholic belief concerning the Real Presence of the *whole Christ*, God and Man, under either kind—the layman loses nothing spiritually by receiving only one of them. He receives just what the priest celebrating Mass receives—namely, the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ. More he could not receive. The practice of the Church in the *manner of administering* lay Communion has been various in different ages. It is still various, inasmuch as certain Oriental Churches in union with Rome still communicate ordinarily—though not invariably—under *both* kinds. Moreover, till the Middle Ages, it was customary, though not universal, in the Latin Church also to receive under both. All this clearly shows that Communion under *one* kind is not regarded by the Catholic Church as a matter of essential principle, but merely of discipline, and hence capable of alteration for weighty reasons. But—to refer to a somewhat shallow non-Catholic objection—did not Christ command us to *drink* His blood as well as to *eat* His flesh? And is the command obeyed by him who receives only under the appearance of eating—*i.e.*, under the appearance of bread? To this one may reply at once that the substance of our Lord's command is that we receive

both His flesh and His Blood. But since the whole Christ includes His Blood as well as His Body, and the whole Christ is contained equally under *either kind*, he who receives either, obviously receives the Precious Blood of Christ as well as His Sacred Flesh, or Body. In using the word 'eat' in connexion with His Flesh, and the word 'drink' in connexion with His Blood, our Lord is but adopting the usages of human speech. It should be noticed that He does not say, 'Except ye eat My Flesh *after the manner of human eating*, and drink My Blood *after the manner of human drinking*.' If it be contended, further, that His words are susceptible of this meaning, then we are confronted once more with the old truth that the 'Bible only' does not suffice to clear up important points of detail appertaining to means of grace which Christ Himself declared to be *essential* for 'having life in us'—for 'having eternal life.'¹ Thus the need of a dogmatically infallible Church—such as no Church but that of the Pope's so much as claims to be—is once more emphasized.

We may next briefly examine the causes of the various disciplinary changes in the mode of administering Holy Communion which have occurred in the course of the Church's history. We refer, of course, always to *lay* Communion; for, that the priest celebrating Mass and communicating at it should use *both* kinds is a matter of Divine institution. 'Do ye *this*,' Christ commanded to His first *priests*. This has never been altered, neither could it be.

Till the appearance of the Manichean heresy—to which St. Augustine of Hippo fell a victim in his unconverted youth—there appears to have been no fixed law of receiving in both kinds. While the custom of doing so

¹ St. John vi. 54, 55.

seems to have prevailed, there were certainly exceptions to the practice—*e.g.*, in the case of the sick. Then the faithful, in times of persecution, seem to have been allowed to take the Blessed Sacrament home for communicating themselves, and it is improbable that the risks of carrying the consecrated chalice would have been tolerated. We read of a Christian boy—Pancratius, or Pancras—carrying the consecrated host to a martyr in prison. Again, infants would have received from the chalice. St. Thomas Aquinas (1274) distinctly refers to a local custom of receiving under *one* kind.

But the rise of heresies at different periods made it necessary to legislate on the point, either locally or universally. Thus, when the Manichean heresy arose, Communion in *both* kinds was insisted on by ecclesiastical authority, owing to the peculiar tenets of the heretics. They taught amongst other errors (1) that wine was essentially an evil thing—we have seen certain extreme teetotallers in our days virtually revive this error; (2) that Christ was not a real man, that He had only the appearance of a human body, a sort of *bloodless* phantom. Hence the Manichean avoided receiving under the 'kind' of *wine*, and out of the 'chalice of His *Blood*.' As long as no law obliged him to the contrary, he might still join the faithful at the Holy Table, while secretly abjuring the teaching of the Church. Hence the insistence on *both* kinds—at all events, in regions infected by the errors of Manicheus.

So, too, when John Huss and Jerome of Prague wandered from the Catholic faith, the Council of Basle ultimately enjoined Communion in *one* kind, to vindicate the true doctrine of the Real Presence.

The Council of Constance confirmed this enactment against the errors of the Taborites and Callixtines; and

the Council of Trent did the same by way of reasserting, against the Reformers, the Catholic truth that, whether we receive under both kinds or under one, we receive neither more nor less than Christ whole and entire.

The denial of the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence, for which the Protestant Reformation is so largely responsible, may be clearly traced in the Anglican 'Book of Common Prayer.' At the end of the Communion Service—in which the communicants are directed to receive the Bread 'into their hands, meekly *kneeling*'—we read the following significant warning, sometimes called the 'Black Rubric':

'Whereas it is ordained in this Office for the Administration of the Lord's Supper that the communicants should receive the same kneeling (which order is well meant for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy receivers, and for the avoiding of such profanation and disorder in the Holy Communion as might otherwise ensue); yet *lest the same kneeling* should by any persons, either out of ignorance and infirmity, or out of malice and obstinacy, be misconstrued and depraved, *It is hereby declared*, That thereby *no adoration is intended or ought to be done*, either unto the Sacramental Bread and Wine there bodily received, *or to any corporal Presence of Christ's natural Flesh and Blood*. For the Sacramental Bread and Wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored (for that were idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians), and the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven, and *not here*. It being against the truth of Christ's natural Body to be at one time in more places than one.'

This declaration, apart from some cryptic meaning

which some think to detect in it, appears to flatly deny, not only Transubstantiation, but any sort of 'true and substantial presence'—even the Lutheran. It even closes with a rationalistic argument against the possibility of the thing. We have here, surely, an assertion of Real *Absence*.

Under this teaching of the official Anglican rite, the bread and wine are reduced to mere symbols, representing respectively the Body and the Blood. If Holy Communion be so understood, then, of course, the Sacrament would not be completed by the reception of one symbol alone. This shows that our Communion in one kind, though itself a matter of discipline only, is, nevertheless, an important vindication of the Real Presence as taught by the Catholic Church.

INDEX.

ABBREVIATIONS, SIGNS, METHOD.—The Arabic numerals refer to *pages*, not to the numbers of 'Letters' or chapters.

f. placed after the page number = see footnote.

ibid. = same page—*i.e.*, as last mentioned.

In the case of supplementary or cross reference the page is generally given, to save sending the reader to another part of the index. If, however, the treatment of the point sought for extend over several divisions, the index heading is also added, to which the said point belongs, and under which its various divisions will be found set forth in detail.

For the main divisions of this work, according to chapters or 'Letters,' see Contents at the beginning of the volume.

N.B.—The following index, besides being generally useful, might serve for preparing an instruction to others on a given subject. The instructor might take a given main heading for his subject, and use the subordinate heads as points for explanation; or, again, a reader, having his own personal improvement in view, might select some main heading connected with his or her duties or position in life and reflect upon the points included under it.

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